

# ST. THOMAS UNIVERSITY STRATEGIC PLAN

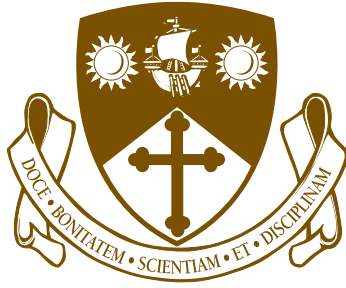
2013-2018

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ACHIEVING EXCELLENCE IN  
UNDERGRADUATE LIBERAL  
ARTS EDUCATION



St. Thomas University



## THE SHARED ASPIRATIONS OF OUR COMMUNITY

**This Strategic Plan** is the result of an extensive consultation with our community. During that process, clear and positive themes emerged about the future of St. Thomas University.

St. Thomas University is a special place for those who study and work here. Our small size, strong sense of community and focus on social justice are characteristics that we want to preserve. There are many features that make us distinct in the post-secondary sector including our singular focus on undergraduate liberal arts education, the quality of our faculty, select and high-quality programs, the informal and friendly culture on campus, and the beauty and accessibility of our campus, just to name a few.

The recent celebration of our centenary was an important moment for our university — it was a time to reflect on our history and accomplishments. It was also an occasion to consider where we are going and who we want to be.

Like every university, St. Thomas University is not just an institution; it is a living body of students, scholars, administrators and stewards. It is a vibrant and diverse community of people, each with their individual goals. This strategic plan reflects the shared aspirations of our community and seeks to nurture those diverse interests which work together to form a common vision.

As we move forward, our academic and administrative leaders will be accountable for developing operational plans to support this Strategic Plan. However, the development and implementation of these plans will require not only strong leadership, but also the support and engagement of our entire community. Further, the Board of Governors and administration are committed to providing our community with an annual report on our progress.

As we begin our second century, we will build on our existing strengths and strive to be on the leading edge of developments that enable our students and faculty to flourish. Doing so will be critical to achieving our long-term vision of being the premier liberal arts undergraduate university in Canada.

Thank you.

### **Members of the Joint Board-Senate Committee** (during development):

**Professor Dawn Russell**, President and Vice-Chancellor, Committee Chair

**Most Rev. Robert Harris**, Chancellor

**Dr. Michael Boudreau** (Senate)

**Mr. Craig Mazerolle** (Senate)

**Ms. Marie-Paule Theriault** (Board)

**Ms. Andrea Seymour** (Board)

**Dr. Robin Vose** (Senate)

**Ms. Dianne Wilkins** (Board)

**Dr. Barry Craig**, Vice President, Academic and Research (Observer)

**Mr. Jeffrey Carleton**, Director, Communications (Observer)



## Meeting Society's Needs

St. Thomas University is well positioned to meet society's requirements for engaged citizens with cosmopolitan perspectives who possess skills in critical thinking, literacy, analysis, communication and collaborative problem solving.

Our institutional characteristics — some rooted in traditions developed over one hundred years and others emerging from more recent developments — contribute to our distinctive place in the post-secondary education sector:

- Our singular focus on undergraduate liberal arts education, offered within a range of traditional disciplines in the humanities, social sciences, natural sciences and fine arts
- Our professional programs in education and social work
- Our unique interdisciplinary programs
- Our faculty commitment to teaching effectiveness and scholarly research
- Our sense of community in a small university where strong relationships are forged
- Our demonstrative concern for and focus on social justice
- Our beautiful campus and safe and vibrant learning environment where students engage in a wide range of academic, extra- and co-curricular activities

Based on these attributes and the new priorities established in our *Strategic Plan 2013–2018*, we are confident of our ability to be the premier liberal arts university in Canada. The plan will enhance the capacity for St. Thomas University to:

- Provide students with an exceptional educational experience
- Offer our faculty and staff a professional, healthy and respectful workplace that encourages personal and collective achievements
- Sustain an *alma mater* of which our alumni can be proud and supportive
- Foster greater societal engagement based on the scholarly research of our faculty and the contributions and achievements of well-educated and engaged students and graduates

*“Liberal education is more important than ever. In a culture where image and icon often short-circuit reason, liberal education seeks to free people from thoughtless adherence to the authoritative opinions of their time and place. In an age where information is prepared for massive and quick consumption, liberal education seeks to strengthen the capacity to raise fundamental questions. In an era characterized by enormous pressures to conform, liberal education seeks to inspire the imagination and engage the spirit.”*

From *The Goals of a Liberal Education at St. Thomas University*



## Goals Of A Liberal Education

The term “liberal arts” refers to a curriculum that aims to impart a breadth of understanding and knowledge, ethical awareness and the capacity for critical reasoning and strong communication skills. A liberal arts curriculum traditionally includes the humanities, social sciences, natural sciences and mathematics. Effectively delivered, this curriculum imparts a liberal education that “empowers individuals with broad knowledge and transferable skills, and a strong sense of values, ethics and civic engagement” (Association of American Colleges and Universities). This approach to liberal education permeates our degree programs in the Bachelor of Arts, Applied Arts, Education and Social Work.

Our community’s belief in the value of a liberal arts education and our aspiration to be the leading liberal arts university in Canada were strongly endorsed during the university-wide consultations that were part of our strategic planning process. During the consultation process, our attention was refocused on *The Goals of a Liberal Education at St. Thomas University* (1996), an important statement in the history of our University. In this document, we articulated our aim to create an academic, cultural and social environment in which each student can develop:

- An independent, inquiring mind
- A breadth of knowledge and depth of understanding
- An awareness of the perennial questions and new challenges confronting humanity
- A depth and consistency of moral judgment
- An ability to write and speak with clarity and precision
- A capacity and lifelong desire for learning

Our consultations with faculty, staff and students have pointed us in a clear direction and the following strategic priorities will guide our activities for the next five years:

*Strategic Priority 1*  
**Excellence in Undergraduate Liberal Arts Education**

*Strategic Priority 2*  
**A Meaningful and Memorable Student Experience**

*Strategic Priority 3*  
**A Commitment to Research and Societal Engagement**

*Strategic Priority 4*  
**A Welcoming, Diverse and Inclusive Community**

*Strategic Priority 5*  
**Financial Sustainability**



# Excellence In Undergraduate Liberal Arts Education

**S**t. Thomas University offers its students a broad and rigorous undergraduate liberal arts education. Achieving excellence in this core activity will be fundamental to fulfilling our vision. It will enhance our distinctiveness, provide a starting point for societal engagement, foster a meaningful and memorable student experience and encourage a more vibrant learning community.

Our institutional vision is to build on our strong traditional disciplines, complemented by select and high-quality interdisciplinary programs, and to challenge our students to attain the highest standards of academic excellence. Building on our existing academic and program strengths, we will provide our students with more opportunities for experiential and applied learning, expose them to diverse pedagogies, and create more opportunities to build academic and extra-curricular relationships.

### WE WILL ACHIEVE THIS BY:

- Fostering a culture of excellence in teaching, research and service to the University
- Challenging students to achieve the highest standards of academic excellence and providing them with appropriate academic support to do so
- Promoting traditional academic disciplines and supporting select high-quality interdisciplinary programs
- Creating opportunities for experiential, applied learning and extra- and co-curricular activities
- Fostering greater student awareness of local and global social justice issues and educating students to address these issues
- Enhancing our offerings in the fine and performing arts, as well as in the natural sciences and mathematics
- Increasing our full-time faculty complement
- Increasing our national and international profile

### WE WILL KNOW THAT WE HAVE BEEN SUCCESSFUL WHEN:

- Student retention and graduation rates increase
- Students' success rates in obtaining scholarships and admission to graduate and professional programs or achieving their career path of choice increase
- Scores on the National Survey of Student Engagement improve
- Students report greater satisfaction with the quality of academic advising
- More groups and organizations offer our students learning opportunities
- More academic majors have a research component as part of their program requirements
- External academic reviews verify the quality of program offerings
- Internal and external awareness of our achievements increase
- Applications from outside traditional recruitment areas have increased
- Percentage of courses taught by full-time faculty has increased



# A Meaningful And Memorable Student Experience

St. Thomas University encourages student engagement in university life — inside and outside the classroom — and we strive to provide a safe and supportive environment where students can pursue a range of interests as they realize their potential. Renewed efforts in this area will enhance student engagement, help strengthen the retention of students through to graduation and foster a vibrant academic, social and cultural community. It will strengthen the distinctiveness of the “STU Experience.”

Our vision is that students will take advantage of the many educational, extracurricular and community leadership activities available to them. All students who attend St. Thomas University should cherish their experience and value the important part that we played in their development.

### WE WILL ACHIEVE THIS BY:

- Developing and implementing a Strategic Enrolment Plan for recruitment and retention to attract qualified and diverse students from Canada and around the world
- Developing a stronger sense of interdependence among members of the university community based on the strength of our academic programs, our shared commitment to undergraduate education and a vibrant intellectual, creative and social campus life
- Providing relevant and accessible support services to optimize each student’s potential
- Developing a systematic approach to leadership development and community service
- Committing to a personalized student experience characterized by close student-faculty interaction and supportive staff
- Providing a diverse range of extracurricular activities
- Investing in the renewal of our residences and strengthening the support for residence life
- Expanding dedicated space for off-campus students

### WE WILL KNOW THAT WE HAVE BEEN SUCCESSFUL WHEN:

- Annual student enrolment is consistently 2,500-2,800 students with increased retention rates
- Students give the University higher scores on the National Survey of Student Engagement
- A higher percentage of students participate in extracurricular activities
- Our residences are an asset to recruitment and retention, occupancy is maximized and off-campus students have dedicated space on campus
- More graduates (alumni) participate in philanthropic campaigns and “give back” to the University



# A Commitment To Research And Societal Engagement

St. Thomas University recognizes the importance of scholarly research to achieving its goal of excellence in undergraduate liberal arts education and in making a distinctive contribution to society. We have a very high proportion of faculty with PhDs or equivalent credentials. They are uniquely placed to design and carry out research and artistic activities that create knowledge and address issues of importance to the community.

Our vision for research and societal engagement is that all faculty members have an active research or creative work agenda. Through their contribution to the creation of knowledge, enhanced understanding and creative works, St. Thomas University will become better known for the quality of its research and active engagement in addressing the most pressing issues confronting society. This priority also has significance for the educational experience of our students. Their experience is enhanced when faculty bring the insights gained from scholarly research to the classroom.

Through our research and creative activities, St. Thomas University is committed to being a positive and transformative presence in society.

### WE WILL ACHIEVE THIS BY:

- Strengthening support for faculty research
- Increasing scholarly and creative production
- Promoting the regional and national visibility of faculty research and creative work
- Facilitating connections between faculty research and external communities (e.g., non-governmental organizations, government, specific communities)

### WE WILL KNOW THAT WE HAVE BEEN SUCCESSFUL WHEN:

- Faculty's scholarly productivity continues to grow
- External research grants increase in number and size
- Larger numbers of faculty are presenting at national and international conferences
- Faculty-student research collaboration increases
- Awareness of our research and creative activities broadens within New Brunswick and beyond



# A Welcoming, Diverse And Inclusive Community

**M**embers of the St. Thomas University community — students, faculty, staff and alumni — are justifiably proud of our beautiful campus and recognize its contribution to creating an environment conducive to learning. At the same time, we strive to match this aesthetic appeal with warmth and openness. We are known as a welcoming and diverse community where members have the opportunity to explore their intellectual and cultural interests in a supportive environment.

We want to share our community with the world. Our vision is to be a home for accomplished faculty, capable and dedicated staff, and talented students from the Maritimes, the rest of Canada, and around the world, all of whom relish the opportunity to be part of a vibrant, creative and supportive liberal arts community.

### WE WILL ACHIEVE THIS BY:

- Developing and implementing a Strategic Recruitment Plan designed to attract qualified and diverse students from across Canada and around the world
- Becoming the university of choice for New Brunswick Aboriginal students and providing the support necessary for their success
- Redressing barriers to access and success for persons with physical and learning disabilities and mental health issues
- Promoting a respectful community free from discrimination
- Increasing participation of internal and external communities in our activities
- Enhancing the environmental sustainability of our campus
- Fostering pride and confidence in our collective accomplishments
- Enhancing St. Thomas University's link to its talented and accomplished alumni network

### WE WILL KNOW THAT WE HAVE BEEN SUCCESSFUL WHEN:

- Annual student enrolment is 2,500–2,800 students, with more international students and an increasingly diverse community
- The rich variety of on-campus extracurricular activities appeals to every member of the community
- Participation and graduation rates for Aboriginal students increase
- Investment in the renewal of campus facilities results in enhanced physical accessibility, greater environmental sustainability and smart use of the latest teaching and learning technology
- Conservation and efficiency indicators show measurable improvements
- The external community participates more actively in our intellectual, cultural, social and athletic life





# Financial Sustainability

**N**one of the preceding strategic priorities can be achieved without maintaining our financial sustainability. Our vision is that St. Thomas University will have diversified, sustainable and predictable sources of revenue capable of supporting our mission. We will strive to obtain provincial funding that is sustainable and equitable compared with other New Brunswick universities, and strive to establish tuition rates that reflect the quality of the educational experience we offer students. We will work to increase our annual funds and endowments in order to increase student access to post-secondary education, contribute more to annual operating costs and support our mission.

### WE WILL ACHIEVE THIS BY:

- Continuing to advocate for autonomy in setting tuition and equitable government funding
- Developing and implementing a long-term strategy for tuition and student financial aid
- Establishing an appropriately staffed and effective Office of Advancement and Alumni Affairs
- Significantly increasing financial support from alumni
- Growing the endowment through fundraising activities

### WE WILL KNOW THAT WE HAVE BEEN SUCCESSFUL WHEN:

- Progress is made in establishing a provincial funding formula that is more equitable, and we have greater autonomy in setting tuition rates
- An Advancement and Alumni Affairs Strategic Plan has been developed and implemented, and is generating support
- An appropriate proportion of revenue is generated by government support, tuition and advancement activities
- The participation of alumni in supporting the Annual Giving Campaign has increased



## MISSION STATEMENT

**W**e are a liberal arts institution whose roots are in the faith and tradition of the Roman Catholic Church. We continue under its sponsorship. We provide an atmosphere hospitable to faith, in which the academic study of the Roman Catholic tradition and the experience of Christian life may be pursued with respect and freedom and where non-Catholic faculty and students are recognized and supported as full and equal participants in the University community.

We are a university primarily concerned with people, ideas, and values. We are an institution with a social conscience. We are united in the belief that women and men of divergent backgrounds and abilities should have an opportunity to learn and practice critical thought and to realize their intellectual potential in an academic setting that is both responsive and stimulating.

The liberal arts, and the principles of liberal education, stand at the core of St. Thomas University. Finding new and more effective ways of studying the liberal arts is a priority. We contend that one of the roles of the University is to help people put ideas and values into action. In that belief, we offer professional programmes which reflect the knowledge, methods, and values of the liberal arts disciplines.

We take pride in welcoming students who show potential, as well as those of proven ability; those who pursue a traditional academic career and those who do not; those who study part time as well as those who study full time. We want our students to succeed, to grow in self-esteem, to experience the joy of intellectual accomplishment. We provide an educational environment in which faculty are accessible, flexible, and committed to excellence in teaching. We encourage our faculty to examine teaching and learning in a critical manner. We foster scholarship and research because we recognize their role in the advancement of knowledge, and in sustaining the quality of teaching and the intellectual life of the University.

We believe that learning engages the whole person; we seek to provide an environment conducive to enriching student life. In this regard, pastoral care is of special concern.

Our shared campus with the University of New Brunswick provides our students and faculty with the best of two worlds—the advantages of a small, intimate, academic community and the amenities of a much larger institution. We take full advantage of this arrangement, upholding our obligations under the affiliation agreement we have with our neighbouring institution, and seeking new avenues of cooperation and partnership beneficial to both communities.

We strive to preserve the tradition of academic freedom. We seek to provide a learning and working atmosphere that is free of discrimination, injustice, and violence, and that is responsive, understanding, open, and fair.

We see ourselves as an important community resource. We welcome the opportunity to share our facilities, talents, and expertise with others; to form partnerships with groups and organizations—whether they are next door or around the world—whose mission, goals, and objectives are in harmony with our own; and to provide cultural, religious, artistic, athletic, and social programming that enhances the quality of life of our city and our province.



# THE GOALS OF A LIBERAL EDUCATION AT ST. THOMAS UNIVERSITY

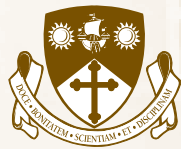
**L**iberal education is an inquiry into what it means to be human — a quest to understand the rational, spiritual, and aesthetic dimensions of human life. Because St. Thomas University is devoted to open-minded inquiry, it encourages a variety of disciplinary approaches to this quest.

Liberal education is more important than ever. In a culture where image and icon often short-circuit reason, liberal education seeks to free people from thoughtless adherence to the authoritative opinions of their time and place. In an age where information is prepared for massive and quick consumption, liberal education seeks to strengthen the capacity to raise fundamental questions. In an era characterized by enormous pressures to conform, liberal education seeks to inspire the imagination and engage the spirit.

At St. Thomas University, the goals of a liberal education are pursued within a humanistic and Catholic tradition. The University aims to create an academic, cultural, and social environment in which each student can develop:

- 1. An independent, inquiring mind.** A liberal education teaches people how to think; it does not dictate what they ought to think. It encourages, through independent reasoning and fair-minded inquiry, the recognition of unstated assumptions, the thoughtful reconsideration of received ideas, and the challenging of simplistic generalizations. The liberal arts thus explore controversial and competing ideas in ways that demand informed, careful, and considered judgement.
- 2. A breadth of knowledge and depth of understanding.** Through both general and specialized studies, a liberal education seeks to stimulate an understanding of the content, methods, and theoretical approaches of different disciplines, as well as a capacity to integrate knowledge across disciplinary boundaries.
- 3. An awareness of the perennial questions and new challenges confronting humanity.** A liberal education encourages appreciation of the variety and complexity of circumstances and human responses to them in different times and places.
- 4. A depth and consistency of moral judgement.** A liberal education emphasizes the seriousness and difficulty of moral and ethical issues, and the necessity of examining them thoroughly.
- 5. An ability to write and speak with clarity and precision.** A liberal education recognizes the connection between clear thinking and effective communication. It fosters the ability to develop sustained, well-reasoned, and clearly-presented arguments.
- 6. A capacity and life-long desire for learning.** Because liberal education is a process of questioning, rather than a set of answers, it is by definition a life-long project. Liberal education seeks to create in students a love of learning and the capacity to continue their personal and intellectual development long after they have left St. Thomas University.





St. Thomas University