

We Believe in St. Mike's: Our Vision for Excellence

Federated with the University of Toronto, the University of St. Michael's College is Canada's leading Catholic University. It is made up of an undergraduate College, a graduate Faculty of Theology, the John M. Kelly Library, and a Continuing Education division, all of which are supported by offices and departments responsible for student life and learning, campus ministry, wellness, alumni and donor relations, finance, communications, and facilities. This community makes St. Mike's a centre of Catholic intellectual thought and an institution of influence that offers perspectives that are both global and local, historic and contemporary.

Cosmopolitan and confident, St. Mike's is a Catholic University that flourishes because of its dialogue with the leading currents of secular life and scholarship and with a variety of faith traditions. Above all, St. Mike's thrives through its multifaceted relationship to one of the world's leading public research universities.

Making a distinct and timely contribution to the University of Toronto, St. Mike's proposes that the life of faith and the life of the mind engage each other in ways that are inspiring and demanding, and that the search for the true, good and beautiful and that the call of social justice share the same source and summit. Through this integration of belief, thought and action, St. Mike's affirms the inherent dignity and wholeness of the human person. St. Mike's offers its students, staff, and faculty a welcoming and demanding community in which members have the opportunity to learn goodness, discipline and knowledge, in solidarity with the mission of its founding religious order, the Basilian Fathers. In sum, the University invites and empowers its members to pursue lives of excellence.

In January 2015, the Senate of the University of St. Michael's College issued a discussion paper that predicted a "unified vision will foster a sense of belonging and collegiality, and prevent a retreat into divisional silos. It will demonstrate a commitment to a single purpose, in which the academic divisions are seen to be interconnected, mutually supportive, collaborating — not mutually irrelevant and competing for resources. This is a Catholic vision of solidarity and subsidiarity in pursuit of the common good." Later that same year, Professor Meric Gertler, President of the University of Toronto, reaffirmed the Three Priorities that he has identified as guiding the University of Toronto toward 2030:

1. Leverage our urban location(s) more fully, for the mutual benefit of University and City.
2. Strengthen and deepen key international partnerships by means of a well-defined strategic focus.
3. Re-imagine and reinvent undergraduate education.

The University of St. Michael's College Academic Plan (2017-2021) seeks to provide a unified vision and to advance these three priorities, and in so doing, live out its mission.

The Academic Plan: How We Created It

The Academic Plan exercise has been defined by collaboration and consultation, incorporating many voices and seeking in particular to hear from students. The goal has been to ensure that the Plan reflects a unified vision and shared consensus, provides a coherent institutional framework for the consideration of division-level plans, and aligns with the priorities and directions of the University of Toronto and the Faculty of Arts and Science's academic planning cycles and models, and likewise with the overall mission of St. Mike's.

Consultees were invited to reflect on the potential for expanding and deepening collaborations with the University of Toronto by forging syntheses between St. Mike's mission and the Three Priorities, and in turn asked to offer their ideas and suggestions for how St. Mike's can achieve excellence in Teaching, Research, Community, and Technology.

Who was involved?

The list of consultees included current undergraduate students — those enrolled in the College and those enrolled in College-sponsored programs and courses; Faculty of Theology students; St. Mike's leadership; University of Toronto senior leadership, decanal leadership from the Faculty of Arts and Science and the Chairs of the resident language departments; members of St. Mike's governing bodies; faculty, instructors, and academic support staff from the College and from the Faculty of Theology; St. Mike's staff members and employees from every office and division; Kelly Library staff members; representatives from Continuing Education including staff, current, and prospective students; donors and alumni ranging in year of graduation from the late 1940s to the 2010s; College Fellows; prospective St. Mike's students; members of the Catholic education community, including guidance counsellors and other advisors to prospective St. Mike's students. In total, through online surveys and 75 in-person consultation sessions that took place from July 2016 through to February 2017, more than 500 people have contributed their ideas and insights to this Academic Plan.

How were these consultations performed?

Consultations took place as individual meetings, group meetings, focus groups, invited written submissions, and online surveys. By having the consultations take these different forms, we were able to meet and hear from consultees in ways that ensured the greatest possible response from the widest array of people.

What were the results of the consultation?

The Academic Plan articulated in the following pages offers a unified vision and also proposals — largely focused on the College, by way of offering one model for other Divisions to adapt — based on these consultations. St. Mike's commits to achieving excellence in Teaching, Research, Community, and Campus and Technology, with a particular focus on intersections and integrations between the sacred and the secular, and between the theoretical and the practical.

Teaching

“We need great teachers!”

—St. Mike's Student

We are undergraduate and graduate students; we are alumni who graduated in the early 2000s and alumni who graduated in late 1940s; we are professors in the College and Theology; we are members of the senior administration of St. Mike's and of the Faculty of Arts and Science and the University of Toronto, and we all agree: St. Mike's defining priority for the next five years is teaching excellence.

Teaching forms the core of this institution's purpose. Through its Faculty of Theology, St. Mike's offers advanced degrees — Masters and Doctorate — designed to prepare graduates for careers in academia, ministry, education, NGOs, and other professions that would benefit from religiously-informed perspectives. Its division of Continuing Education offers certificates and programming that deliver professional development and promote lifelong learning. The Kelly Library supports teaching and learning for USMC divisions and for the Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, the Toronto School of Theology, and the University of Toronto language departments — French, German, Italian, and Slavic — that reside on campus. Through its College, St. Mike's sponsors four undergraduate programs for students in the Faculty of Arts and Science — Book and Media Studies, Celtic Studies, Christianity and Culture, and Mediaeval Studies. It also offers The Gilson Seminar in Faith and Ideas, a program that provides first-year students with a transformative learning experience at the start of their university educations.

We will achieve teaching excellence by hiring inspiring and accomplished teachers who forge exemplary connections and understandings across theoretical-practical and sacred-secular divides. In continuity with decades of life-changing learning experiences that students have had here, teaching at St. Mike's affirms the wholeness of the person both in and beyond the classroom. St. Mike's will seek professors who model for our students what it means to be cosmopolitan and responsible 21st century scholars, intellectuals, and contributors to a just and right-ordered society. St. Mike's will focus on teaching-stream and tenure-stream appointments and seek creative collaborations internally, with the University of Toronto, and with Regis College and St. Augustine's Seminary. The President, the Vice-President & Principal, the Dean of Theology, the Chief Librarian, Collegium, and the Offices of Advancement and Finance together shape and advance this mission of teaching excellence. The generosity of our alumni and supporters makes it possible.

St. Mike's will simultaneously reimagine its course-offerings across its divisions to make these more responsive to student interests in international and professional experiences, to emerging pedagogical trends related to collaborative teaching, interdisciplinarity, and e-learning, and to engage pressing societal needs related to the sacred and secular, and to the theoretical and practical.

Research

“I would love more research opportunities!”

—St. Mike's student

We are a community of scholars inspired by truth, beauty and charity. We are committed to advancing knowledge for its own sake and in service of social justice. Our individual and collective work unfolds in continuity with decades of preeminent scholarship at St. Mike's, and in collaboration with colleagues from throughout the University of Toronto and from institutions across the country and around the world. We are committed, as a community of scholars, to providing our students with opportunities for exceptional research experiences, which will be a defining feature of their educations at St. Mike's and at the University of Toronto.

St. Mike's is made up of four distinct communities of scholars: the faculty members of the Faculty of Theology, the faculty members who teach in the College, the librarians of Kelly Library, and the College Fellows, who are accomplished University of Toronto professors from a range of disciplines and who also contribute to the mission and community life of the institution. St. Mike's will achieve excellence in research by supporting scholars in their individual activities, which collectively attest to the timely insights discoverable at intersection and integration points between the sacred and secular, and between the theoretical and practical. The Kelly Library provides the defining research infrastructure for these activities, with its distinctive holdings, special collections, digital resources, and dynamic work and study spaces.

We will support new research initiatives that encourage collaboration across our distinct communities of scholars and advance the mission of the institution in creative and dynamic ways. These initiatives could include, for instance, an online platform to bring together collective scholarly activities, facilitated by the Kelly Library; an interdisciplinary research institute focused on liturgy and music that seeks institutional partners in Toronto and beyond; and annual advanced research seminars on the relationship between faith and public life, science, literature, education, indigenous experience, digital scholarship, and ecology. These seminars could be proposed by St. Mike's faculty members, advanced graduate students in Theology, and postdoctoral fellows, and led by scholars from our community or by invited scholars.

Undergraduate students seek research opportunities and mentorship from College Fellows. They regard these opportunities as foundational to a University of Toronto education and consistent with their expectations of belonging and identity as part of the College. St. Mike's will reimagine its College Fellows program and make undergraduate mentorship opportunities its defining feature. St. Mike's will support the appointment of a new Senior Advisor, Research and Community, who will report directly to the President and Vice-President. The office-holder will promote new research initiatives related to sacred-secular and theoretical-practical pairings, and encourage collaboration across our communities of scholars and students.

Community

“Your College is your home.”

—St. Mike's student

We are a community of students, staff, faculty, religious and alumni united in our commitments to truth, charity and justice. We live out our common life together both for ourselves and for others, including neighbours and visitors to our campus, members of the greater University of Toronto community, and the greater Catholic communities in Toronto and around the world. We take pride in our sense of place and belonging at St. Mike's. We are loyal to our academic and faith traditions and excited by new ideas and visions.

St. Mike's will be an exemplar of a 21st century college community at the University of Toronto. We are confident that we offer students, staff and faculty a timely, needed, and exceptional opportunity: Nowhere else in the world can someone be part of both a collegiate Catholic intellectual community and a world-renowned public research university.

We will share this opportunity by prioritizing community-building efforts concentrated on student recruitment and student life. Undergraduate recruitment efforts will be led by the Principal in collaboration with the Director of Student Life & Registrar and focus on Catholic high schools in the Greater Toronto Area, elsewhere in Canada, and on historic partner-schools in the United States. We will collaborate with recruitments efforts by the Faculty of Arts and Science and University of Toronto. St. Mike's will increase the number of first-year students who make an informed, intentional, and motivated decision to be part of this community.

We will live out the promises we make to our students and their families by providing them with a community that's both welcoming and demanding of their best selves. Student life at St. Mike's will be healthy and exciting, caring and emboldening, and focus on the specific needs of both commuter and residence students, and the needs of both part-time and full-time graduate students. Out of these commitments, we will provide our many external partners and supporters with opportunities to be part of our community life.

Through a new President's Fund for Excellence, community members can propose initiatives that celebrate longstanding traditions and fresh ways of enhancing community life, including the refurbishment of underutilized spaces to make these more inviting to all. The Principal will focus attention and support on student life associated with the Gilson Seminar and with Book and Media Studies, Celtic Studies, Christianity and Culture, and Mediaeval Studies. The Dean of Theology will focus attention and support on cultivating belonging for both full-time and part-time graduate students. The Kelly Library will provide gathering spaces and opportunities for innovative activities related to learning and discovery. Continuing Education will provide programming that engages alumni in ways relevant both to their lives and to the mission of St. Mike's. Advancement will identify opportunities, throughout this community-building effort, to invite our proud, loyal and committed alumni to join us.

Campus

“We need a new building!”

—St. Mike's staff member

We pursue our studies and work in one of the most beautiful places in the City of Toronto. On our campus, we provide spaces for learning, worship, study, gathering, dining, living, and play. We want our campus, and these spaces and the materials within them, to affirm and embody our belief in the relationship between truth, goodness and beauty. We also want to ensure that students, staff, and faculty have access to technological resources that enable them to achieve excellence in all that they do.

St. Mike's occupies a historic parcel of land in downtown Toronto, situated on the east side of the University of Toronto St. George campus and close by the commercial and cultural centres of a global city. For its community members and for its visitors, St. Mike's offers a campus defined by architectural and natural beauty. Its religiously-informed artwork and its distinguished exterior spaces afford opportunities for contemplation and leisure, affirming the wholeness of a person otherwise intensively engaged in academic pursuits or in providing professional support for those pursuits.

St. Mike's will sustain its exterior beauty while identifying opportunities to enhance its interior spaces. With leadership from the President and in collaboration with the Bursar's Office, Facilities, and Student Life, on a case-by-case basis St. Mike's will devote attention and resources to achieve a quality, consistency, and coherence of furnishing, appointments, and visual identity consistent with the exterior beauty of the campus and with the St. Mike's mission.

Likewise, on a case-by-case basis St. Mike's will increase its capacity to offer seamless, efficient, appealing and superior technological services to all members of its community — whether in its digital presence, in the classroom, for public events, or in the processes and activities of various offices and departments. St. Mike's will also support faculty and staff seeking to increase their technological literacy. The Principal, together with the Offices of Advancement and Bursar will identify opportunities for grants, programs, and explore collaborations with neighboring institutions that support these enhancement efforts. We will update our master plan for the campus in the coming years so that it is informed by this Plan, and along the way we will seek smarter, fairer, and more efficient use of the space available to us, prioritizing the needs of our students in terms of classrooms and community space.

St. Mike's will explore opportunities for new building projects that could both add to the beauty of the campus and dramatically augment and modernize our space offerings. In that effort and in all that this Academic Plan proposes, St. Mike's will seek bold and dynamic new venues, platforms, partners and people, all of which will ensure we flourish as a leading centre of Catholic intellectual and community life whose mission contributes in exciting and creative ways to the mission of one of the world's great public research universities.

The St. Mike's Credo

We are St. Mike's, and

We believe that Teaching, Research, and Community life encompass the Sacred and the Secular, the Theoretical and Practical

We believe that Teaching is our first purpose

We believe that Research reveals truth, advances knowledge, and empowers students

We believe that Community life affirms the wholeness of the human person

We believe that our Campus is a place of beauty, repose, and purpose

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DRAFT

"I'M SO EXCITED!!!"

—MaryRose Doucette, Class of 2021
The first student admitted to the
Gilson Seminar in Faith and Ideas