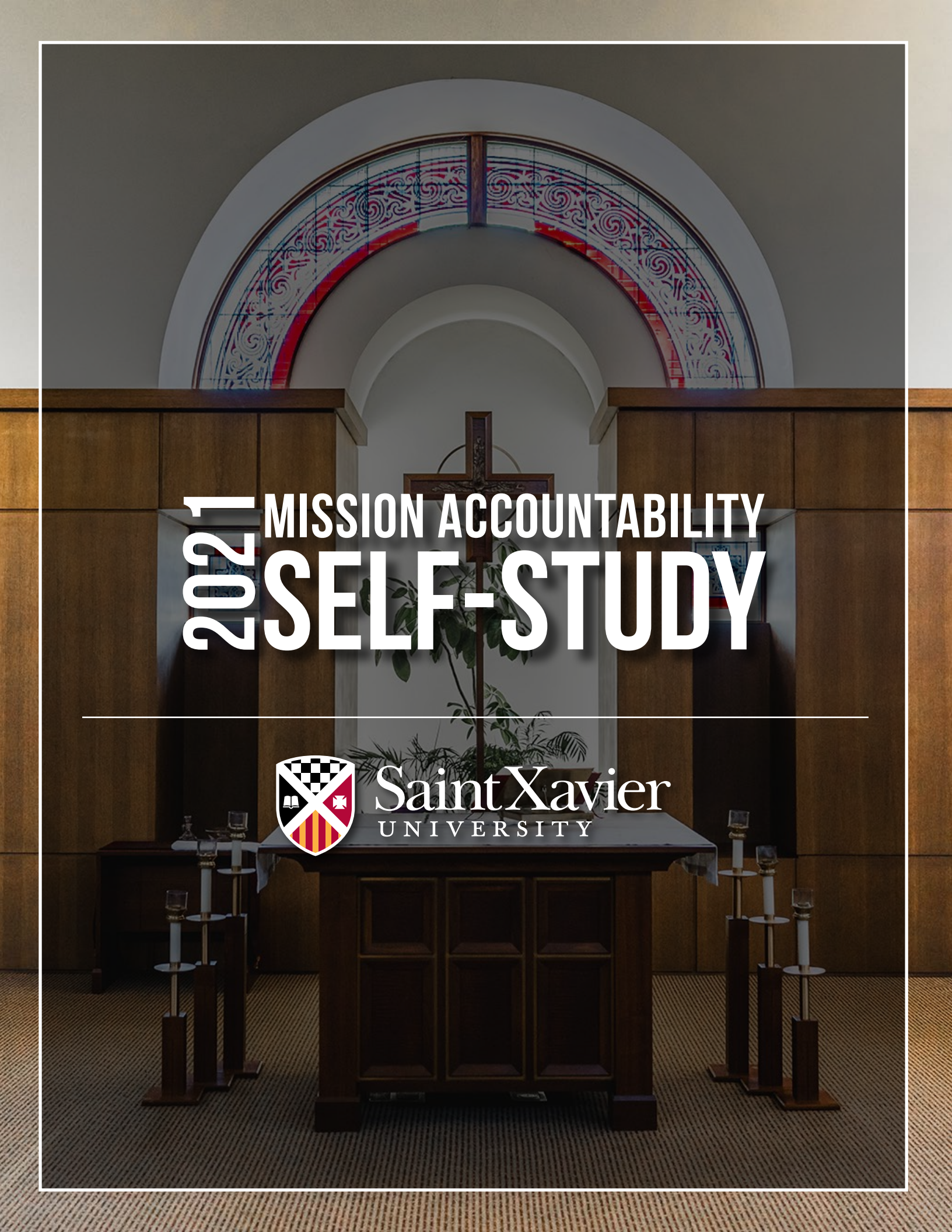


2021 MISSION ACCOUNTABILITY SELF-STUDY

Saint Xavier UNIVERSITY

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INTRODUCTION

A. HISTORY

The Saint Francis Xavier Academy for Females opened in Chicago on October 12, 1846, 19 days after five Sisters of Mercy, led by Mother Frances Xavier Warde, arrived in Chicago. When Mother Warde returned to Pittsburgh, the Chicago foundation was led by 24-year-old Mother Agatha O'Brien, whom Bishop O'Connor deemed, "capable of ruling a nation."

Saint Xavier received its charter from the state of Illinois in 1847. It has the distinct honor of being the first Catholic institution of higher learning in Chicago and the oldest Mercy institution of higher learning in the world. This year marks the 175th anniversary of the Sisters of Mercy's ministry in Chicago.

Following its destruction by the Great Chicago Fire of 1871, the Academy was rebuilt at 29th Street in 1873. The institution moved two more times, in 1901 and in 1956, when it finally settled at its present 103rd Street campus. In 1935, the then Saint Xavier College, partnering with Mercy Hospital, launched the first nursing program in Illinois that integrated an academic credential with a field of practice. In 1937, Saint Xavier College was accredited by the North Central Association of Secondary Schools and Colleges. Men were admitted beginning in 1969. In 1992, Saint Xavier College was given university status and was renamed Saint Xavier University (SXU).

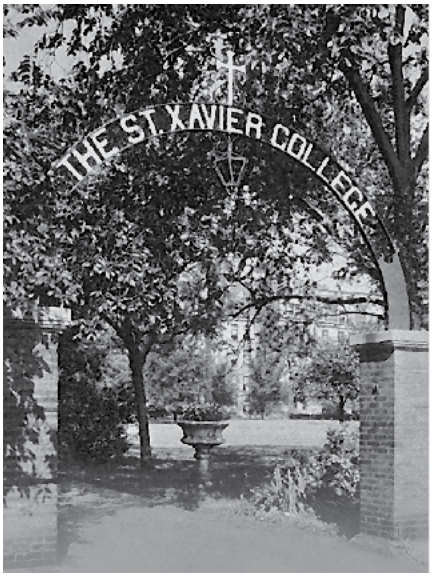
The Sisters of Mercy have had a strong presence among the faculty, staff and administration from the beginning. The representation of these Sisters at all levels of the institution intrinsically integrated the Catholic, Mercy mission into the structures, policies and decisions of SXU. As with many Catholic universities after Vatican II, which saw a decline in employees who were members of the sponsoring community, Saint Xavier had to choose how to continue its Catholic and Mercy identity. The formation of the Office for Mission and Heritage reflects a key element of Saint Xavier's decision, determination and commitment to continue operating as a Catholic, Mercy institution.

B. CURRENT LEADERSHIP

Laurie M. Joyner, Ph.D., began her service as the 20th president of Saint Xavier University in January 2017, having previously served as president of Wittenberg University as well as in multiple vice presidential and academic dean roles at Rollins College.

Known as a mission-driven and student-centered administrator passionately committed to institutional success, President Joyner has championed mission integration efforts, inclusive excellence initiatives and the alignment of organizational structure and resources to drive educational quality and improved institutional performance. Under her leadership, SXU has shifted its strategic enrollment management strategy, expanded academic and athletic offerings, adopted best practices, engaged in organizational restructuring, initiated multiple revenue-generating efforts and launched an award-winning rebranding campaign all culminating in dramatically improved institutional performance.

During her presidency, SXU embarked on the **STRIVE 2025: Pathways to Institutional Excellence, Accountability and Sustainability Strategic Plan (STRIVE 2025)**, enrolled its two largest and most diverse first-year classes in its 175-year history, increased first-to-second year retention for three consecutive years, expanded high-impact educational practices and institutionalized a service excellence initiative aligned with SXU's core values of respect, collaboration, responsiveness and effectiveness. SXU has also secured the largest federal grant









Clockwise from top left image: Main gate at St. Xavier College and Academy; the Sisters of Mercy; President Joyner engaging with students at a campus event; aerial view of SXU's campus residential quad

in institutional history, established the first endowed professorship, and since FY16 has reduced long-term debt by 45%, increased cash on hand by 65%, increased total financial assets by more than 100% and tripled its endowment. Efforts under President Joyner's leadership have resulted in SXU posting the strongest financial ratios in more than a decade, allowing the institution to invest in SXU's dedicated faculty and staff with recent across-the-board salary increases as well as equity and merit awards.

President Joyner is passionate about improving diversity, equity and inclusion on campus and is a 2019 National Inclusive Excellence Leadership Academy (NIXLA) Fellow. During her tenure, SXU became one of 29 colleges across the state to form the **Illinois Equity in Attainment (ILEA)** initiative, a partnership geared toward eliminating racial and socioeconomic achievement gaps across student groups while increasing graduation rates by 2025. Institutional support has also expanded to advance equity-minded practices across the University.

President Joyner serves on the Archdiocese of Chicago Catholic School Board, where she currently leads the Academic Excellence Committee, and is a member of the Executive Committee. She also serves on the St. Laurence High School Board of Directors where she leads the Mission Effectiveness and Academic Committee of the Board. Nationally, President Joyner has collaborated with the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities (ACCU) to develop the Institute for New Catholic Presidents, and closer to home, she serves as a mentor with the Chicago Network and the Executive Club of Chicago.

Dr. Joyner's **Senior Leadership Team** is comprised of talented and experienced professionals representing the scope of the academic enterprise:

Michael Marsden, Ph.D., Interim Provost, brings more than five decades of academic experience, including three decades of academic administrative experience to SXU. Having served as the chief academic officer at one public university and three private Catholic colleges before coming to Saint Xavier, Dr. Marsden is moving the University forward to effect the changes needed to address the internal and external challenges facing higher education.

Dan Klotzbach, MBA, Vice President for Finance and Administration/CFO, brings nearly 25 years of leadership experience to SXU. Since arriving at SXU, Klotzbach has been instrumental in reducing long-term debt and increasing quasi-endowment by selling non-performing real estate. Additionally, he negotiated an interest swap, oversaw the restructuring of various departments within the University and entered into new vendor relationships resulting in significantly reduced expenses.

Engaged in higher education data analytics for more than 40 years, **Kathleen Carlson**, Ph.D., Executive Director of Institutional Research and Special Assistant to the President, has served in a variety of leadership roles in the academic, enrollment management and institutional research arenas. During her tenure at SXU, Dr. Carlson has guided the University's strategic decision-making by designing and supporting increasingly sophisticated standards of institutional assessment to support student success and institutional sustainability.

Previously having served as biblical studies faculty in the Catholic higher education sector, **Jenny DeVivo** '99, Ph.D., Executive Director for Mission and Heritage, brings to SXU extensive knowledge of theology and Catholic religious orders, especially the Sisters of Mercy. Combining these areas of expertise, Dr. DeVivo strives to bring deeper understanding and integration of our Catholic and Mercy identity to the Saint Xavier community.

Building on 20 years of marketing and advertising expertise, **Deb Rapacz**, M.S., Associate Vice President for Marketing and Communications, offers an additional 10 years of higher education experience to advance SXU's reputation, mission, enrollment and fundraising. As an ambassador for SXU's brand, Rapacz makes sure its actions, systems, messaging and metrics emanate from it, helping to highlight and articulate what it stands for and building a culture around its brand value.

With more than 20 years of experience in higher education, **Katy Thompson** '99, M.A., Dean of Students, has served SXU through its evolution of student affairs and housing. Thompson has cultivated a highly trained and collaborative professional and paraprofessional student affairs staff, contributed at all levels of student support management, and designed innovative programming, staying connected to and representing the student voice to administrative leadership.

With more than 15 years of fundraising experience in both the higher education and foundation settings, **Erin Mueller**, M.A., Associate Vice President for University Advancement, has helped to secure two of the largest federal grants and the first endowed professorship in the University's 175-year history, while continuously reducing the cost to raise a dollar. During her tenure, Mueller has served on numerous University committees, including strategic planning and accreditation committees.

Maggie Eaheart '89, M.A., Chief of Staff, draws upon her more than 20 years of higher education experience, having served SXU in the offices of Admission, Human Resources, Information Technology and the President's Office. During her time, she has led multiple interdepartmental projects and through effective change-management has implemented communications improvements, institutional data integrity assurances, and best-practice business processes and policies.



Previous and current Board of Trustee members at the 2018 SXU Commencement ceremony

Allison Kern, B.A., Director of Athletics, brings 13 years of college athletics experience and a broad perspective from a variety of institutions. Since arriving to SXU, Kern has directed new department resource development initiatives, integrated Athletics further into the campus community and instituted effective resource management practices within the department.

Brian Hotzfield '99, MBA '10, offers nearly 20 years of experience in college admissions, culminating into his current role of Assistant Vice President of Strategic Enrollment Management. He has helped to recruit the two largest and most diverse first-year classes in SXU history. His experience spans all areas of strategic enrollment management, and he has worked across University lines to develop effective recruitment and retention strategies

SXU's **Extended Leadership Team** includes the senior team members plus academic deans, University Fellows, leadership for the Center for Inclusive Excellence, the University Chief Information Officer, and Faculty Senate and Staff Council leadership.

I. THE CATHOLIC, MERCY MISSION AND SAINT XAVIER UNIVERSITY

A. VISION

Saint Xavier University embraces a shared vision among all constituent groups to create a mission-focused, learning organization that educates students for competence, character and career success within the context of a sustainable financial model to ensure the SXU ministry continues in perpetuity.

B. MISSION STATEMENT

Saint Xavier University, a Catholic institution inspired by the heritage of the Sisters of Mercy, educates persons to search for truth, to think critically, to communicate effectively, and to serve wisely and compassionately in support of human dignity and the common good.

C. PHILOSOPHY

Saint Xavier University continues to build upon the ideals of its founders and sponsors, the Sisters of Mercy. Inspired by their Catholic faith and its mandate of union and charity, the Sisters established an academy defined by intellectual rigor in the tradition of the liberal arts and the encouragement of religious faith and action in solidarity with the economically poor of the world, especially women and children.

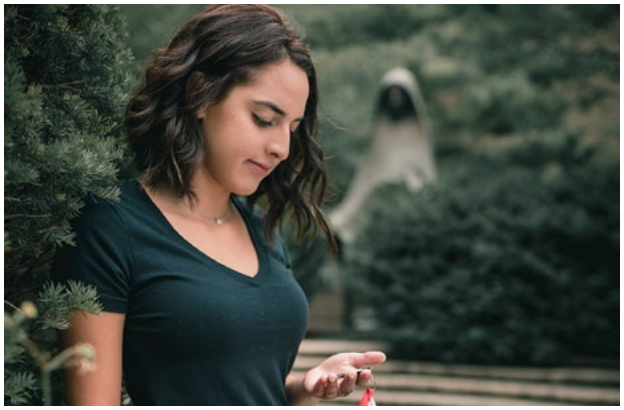
Consistent with this tradition, the University offers challenging undergraduate, graduate and professional programs, characterized by an alliance of faculty, students, staff, administration and community members who are committed to providing coursework, instruction, support services, educational activities and campus facilities that foster excellence in teaching and learning. As a Catholic, Mercy university, SXU is deeply committed to the development of the whole student through curricular and co-curricular experiences informed by the Catholic intellectual tradition (CIT), Catholic social teaching (CST), the spiritual and corporal works of Mercy and the Critical Concerns of the Sisters of Mercy.

At the heart of the academic mission is the University's commitment to a General Education Program that introduces students to college learning, broadens their knowledge across disciplines, integrates learning and community concerns, and develops transferable skills that prepare them for meaningful lives and successful careers. In all programs of study, the University encourages the examination of fundamental questions and the search for truth within the context of respectful dialogue amid diverse perspectives.

As part of a Catholic, Mercy university that values intellectual rigor and academic freedom, SXU faculty develop and teach courses in their areas of recognized expertise, conduct research in their disciplines, produce scholarly and creative work, and serve the University and community. Faculty are also responsible for academic policies and the design and content of the University curriculum. In teaching, scholarship and service, faculty advance the mission of SXU as reflected in the intellectual life of the University.

Students at Saint Xavier encounter a wide range of coursework, co-curricular activities, community experiences and support services designed to enhance learning and develop confidence as contributing citizen leaders of increasingly complex, global communities. The University seeks students of diverse talents, experiences, knowledge, interests and cultures who are willing to learn, develop their values, and seek excellence in themselves and others.






Clockwise from top left image: Mother Frances Xavier Warde; student leadership ringing the Academy Bell; student reflecting on the inscription written on the new student medallion at Mary's Circle; dedication of SXU's statue of Mary, titled "Our Lady"

SXU's dedicated community members are charged with planning, budgeting, assessment and continuous improvement, which are vital to actualizing institutional mission. The enduring support of alumni, emeriti faculty, Sisters of Mercy sponsors, trustees, and other friends and contributors in the community at large demonstrates their continuing faith in the central mission of Saint Xavier through various acts of prayer, service and philanthropic support.

The SXU community is built on the belief that faith and reason interact in mutually fruitful ways. The University encourages the search for truth, while respecting freedom and personal expression. It also promotes a vigorous and compassionate dialogue among various faith traditions and their intersection with the full range of academic disciplines.

D. CATHOLIC AND MERCY IDENTITY

As an officially recognized ministry of the Catholic Church, the University grounds its core activities of teaching, learning, scholarship and service in Catholic theological principles that affirm the goodness and value of all creation and posit a view of all human persons as created in the image of God.

As a Catholic, Mercy university, SXU calls all community members to search for truth, especially religious truth, and engage in dialogue between faith and reason that ultimately leads toward the contemplation of God's creation and social action for the common good. This endeavor demands careful observation, critical analysis, vigorous debate, personal and communal reflection, and ethical and engaged decision-making leading toward a life that respects both the inherent dignity of others and the intrinsic beauty and worth of all creation. The University encourages its community, especially its students, to become familiar with the richness of the Catholic intellectual tradition and the tenets of Catholic social teaching. Respecting academic freedom, the University strives to be a place where the vigorous discussion of ideas can occur, especially as they relate to its mission as a Catholic university. In the spirit of respectful and critical discourse, the University welcomes the breadth of the Catholic tradition as well as the voices of other religious and non-religious communities.





Left to right: Campus banners are hung to reflect SXU's Catholic identity; Sister Jeanine McAdams, R.S.M., and Former Mayor Richard J. Daley

One of SXU's seminal characteristics is its commitment to service. Ideally, such service, whether direct or through the University's efforts to understand and remediate unjust systems, reflects the spirituality of Catherine McAuley. This spirituality is grounded in the theology of the Incarnation, animated by the life, death and resurrection of Jesus and expressed through acts of compassion that embody the spiritual and corporal works of Mercy. Aligned from the beginning with the Sisters of Mercy vow to care for the poor, the sick and the uneducated, Saint Xavier's mission remains concerned with alleviating the suffering of the poor and the sick through education and health care. In doing so, the University goes beyond passive expressions of heartfelt concern and calls on community members to stand with those who suffer. It seeks to right what is wrong and restore what is broken, thereby promoting human dignity, justice and the common good.

SXU signifies and celebrates its Catholic and Mercy heritage in its symbolic, sacramental, and liturgical expressions and its community offerings. The University provides many opportunities to reflect, pray, worship and access the sacraments. It symbolizes its rich faith tradition through the appropriate placement of religious symbols and artwork throughout campus. Further, it observes liturgical seasons and feasts, central to its Catholic and Mercy heritage, and provides orientation and mentoring programs that educate the community about its identity.

Recognizing that the search for God and the celebration of God's presence is ubiquitous, the University provides opportunities for those of other faith traditions and those on a personal journey of faith to study, express, worship, celebrate and discuss religious beliefs in a climate that is respectful, hospitable and open to all.

SXU honors Jesus Christ whom it recognizes as ***Via, Veritas, Vita*** – "the Way, the Truth, and the Life" (John 14:6), the motto of the University inscribed on its coat of arms.

E. CORE VALUES

- **Respect** moves community members to understand the gifts and unique contributions of every person in the community and to value diverse perspectives.
- **Excellence** commits community members to utilize their God-given gifts – intellectual, social, physical, spiritual and ethical.
- **Diversity** builds a community that fosters a climate that is open and welcoming to diverse people, ideas and perspectives, that promotes a constructive discourse on the nature of diversity, and that engages faculty, staff and students in activities that promote the University's core values.
- **Compassion** compels community members to stand with and embrace others in their suffering so that all may experience God's liberating and healing presence.
- **Hospitality** draws community members to carry out daily work with a spirit of graciousness that welcomes new ideas and people of all backgrounds and beliefs.
- **Integrity** gives community members the ability to realize the greater good in actions and programs and challenges all to look at their work and themselves holistically and as one united with others across the globe.





Left to right: SXU main entrance pillars to the Warde Academic Center; Via, Veritas, Vita – "the Way, the Truth, and the Life," SXU's motto inscribed on its coat of arms

- **Learning for Life** encourages community members to pursue knowledge and truth throughout their lives in ways that improve their communities and themselves and that strengthen their understanding of each other.
- **Service** calls community members to use their gifts, talents and abilities to advance the genuine well-being of their community and those they encounter.

F. EMBEDDING THE MISSION

Evidence of mission support and integration exists in several areas of the University. Saint Xavier's commitment to its Catholic and Mercy heritage and mission is built into its bylaws.

The **SXU Board of Trustees** is responsible for safeguarding and advancing the University's educational and religious mission and purpose, especially its Catholic, Mercy character. Trustees have addressed multiple crises during the past decade. In every case, trustees have acted in ways required of fiduciaries, while demanding that Mercy mission and justice considerations inform discussions and decisions. Their actions have been essential to preserving the mission of SXU and ensuring that its educational ministry of the Church continues.

Much of the work of the Board takes place through committees including: Ensuring Educational Quality, Sustainable Financial Model, Governance, and Audit. As one example, the **Ensuring Education Quality (EEQ)** Committee of the Board of Trustees exists to assist the Board in its fiduciary responsibility to oversee the educational quality of SXU by examining and reviewing curricular and co-curricular programs and activities to be certain all are mission-driven and subject to quality assurance and improvement processes. As a member of the Board, the **President** serves as the **Chief Mission Officer** with the delegated responsibility for preserving and enhancing the Catholic, Mercy mission and heritage of the institution.

Reporting to the President, the **Executive Director for Mission and Heritage** (EDMH) serves on the Senior Leadership Team. The EDMH makes regular mission presentations to the senior team and at every Board of Trustee meeting. The EDMH chairs SXU's **Mission Integration Committee**, which represents faculty and staff from across the institution and serves in an advisory capacity to examine mission-related efforts and plan future mission endeavors.

Recognizing the intersection of **mission and effective shared governance**, elected **Faculty Senate and Staff Council** leadership actively participates in the EEQ Committee, contributes to every Board of Trustee meeting and serves on SXU's Extended Leadership Team.

The ongoing work of mission integration takes places at every level of the University. This report was informed through the contributions of trustees, administrators, faculty, staff, students, alumni, donors and friends.

II. APPLYING OUR MISSION
THROUGH PROGRAMS, POLICIES AND PRACTICES

Saint Xavier's Mercy mission is embedded throughout institutional programs, policies and practices, all of which inform one another in the overall governance and daily work of the University.

A. CURRICULAR DEVELOPMENT AND INTEGRATION

Catholic identity and the Mercy charism both shape and provide coherence to the curriculum at Saint Xavier. This curriculum exposes students to a wide range of ideas and experiences in the context of the Christian worldview espoused and expressed by the Catholic faith and the Sisters of Mercy.

The priority to develop a plan for mission integration for first-year students was set with the goal of making clear the strong relationships between Catholic, Mercy and SXU mission components. Building on the phrase "what we do matters," SXU knows that through intentional connections to fundamental principles, students will actualize the mission in their daily lives.

The SXU community determined that the following points lay the mission foundation:

- everyone is made in God's image;
- the greatest commandments are to love God and neighbor;
- the power of education and service in transforming lives in the spirit of Catherine McAuley;
- the fourth vow of the Sisters of Mercy to care for the poor, the sick and the uneducated is key to guiding institutional efforts; and
- tracing SXU's core values to something specifically Catholic and Mercy is vital.

All SXU incoming first-year students participate in Via, a program that introduces them to SXU's Catholic and Mercy heritage and outlines available resources and student support services. The program's name is a tribute to the University motto Via, Veritas, Vita, Latin for "the Way, the Truth and the Life" from the scripture verse, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). Via promotes a sense of belonging for new members of the SXU community.

Via students learn about SXU's Catholic heritage, its Mercy mission and the history and Critical Concerns of the Sisters of Mercy. Students also learn about Campus Ministry and how it supports prayer and faith-sharing. Participants discuss how they can work with local, national, and international communities for overall human betterment. During 2020-2021, incoming first-year students participated in an **online orientation program**.

SXU's curriculum also requires entering students to enroll in **Transitions (TS 100)**, a one-hour course designed to orient students to college life, promote curricular success and co-curricular involvement as well as introduces students to the University mission, core values and Critical Concerns of the Sisters of Mercy. During this course, students identify the five Critical Concerns and articulate the relevance of one or more of these Concerns to their future goals. Each student must submit an essay that is graded and assessed with a common rubric regarding one Critical Concern and how it can apply to their life and career. In 2020, course requirements of Transitions (TS 100) were expanded to include a three-week focus on anti-racism using discussion and readings including materials from the Sisters of Mercy.









Clockwise from top left image: Graduate student in the Robert and Mary Rita Murphy Stump Library; freshman orientation students and leaders stand under the SXU arch during Via; Mercy Rock is a reflection of the Mercy institutions in the U.S.; classroom in the 1900s

This course includes a number of topics designed to help students discern their interest and consider their college trajectory as well as life after Saint Xavier.

Two courses offered by the Philosophy and Religious Studies Department serve as cornerstones of the first-year experience. **The Examined Life (PHIL 140)** engages students in philosophical reflection, addressing the ethical and social issues that are the foundation of the Critical Concerns. **First-Year Seminar (FYS 175)** explores Catholic intellectual tradition (CIT) and Mercy heritage, specifically the history and charism of the Sisters of Mercy, and introduces college-level learning. All sections introduce SXU students to biblical texts and biblical exegesis while fostering theological, religious and moral literacy. As an introduction to college-level learning, both First-Year Seminar (FYS 175) and The Examined Life (PHIL 140) fulfill an essential part of the Mercy mission of Saint Xavier to educate students and provide maximum opportunity for their success in college and beyond.

Mission concerns inform and shape the courses in the General Education Curriculum. Prior to fall 2018, students with lower test scores were placed into a developmental writing course (ENGL 100) prior to being enrolled in the typical first-year writing course (ENGL 120). In fall 2018, the Language and Literature Department piloted a learning lab in which students who tested into ENGL 100 were placed into ENGL 120 plus a one-credit lab. This approach allows students to stay on track with their peers by reducing the two-semester sequence to one semester. Comparison of those placed in ENGL 100 to those in ENGL 120 + Lab showed that students in ENGL 120 + Lab performed better (94%) than students in ENGL 100. ENGL 120 + Lab were retained to the spring at a higher rate than those who were placed in ENGL 100: 92% as compared to 80%.





From left to right: School of Nursing and Health Sciences class; nursing students in the early 1900s

Similarly, developmental math courses at the 090-level were combined and revised to support retention by moving more students into credit-bearing math courses sooner. In fall 2019, **a new developmental course** combined key concepts from elementary and intermediate algebra courses and became the prerequisite for 100-level statistics, liberal arts math and geometry for art and design courses. This approach has been successful, as evidenced by improved success rates in fall 2019 (72%) compared with fall 2017 (47%).

As students advance beyond the General Education Curriculum into their majors, they continue to experience a curriculum informed and shaped by Saint Xavier's Catholic identity and Mercy mission. A **standard syllabus template**, which incorporates the mission statement, was institutionalized in 2018. This change gives prominence to the mission in all courses and communicates Saint Xavier's centrality of purpose.

Numerous major and minor programs in the College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) are offered with explicit reference to Mercy and CIT, most notably Religious Studies and Philosophy but also Education, Criminal Justice, Political Science, Sociology and Biology along with interdisciplinary minors in Women and Gender Studies, Environmental and Sustainability Studies and others. Additionally, many individual courses explicitly reference Mercy values and the Critical Concerns (e.g., ENGL 155, HIST 240, MUS 115, PHIL 254, PSYCH 328, RELST 211, SOC 317, and others).

Collaborative interdisciplinary courses also exemplify the Mercy values and the Critical Concerns. For example, the **Yellowstone Project (PHIL 242)** combines a full-semester course experience with spring break travel-study to advance the Mercy Critical Concern for Earth. A collaboration of the Philosophy Department and the sciences, the weeklong, travel-study program affords students an opportunity to engage in policy-oriented fieldwork for academic credit, under the direct supervision of naturalists, ecologists and environmentalists who live and work in the greater Yellowstone area. The hands-on experience focuses on sustainability as students learn about the preservation of the public lands of the Yellowstone ecosystem. This program is fully funded by a grant from the National Science Foundation's Hispanic-Serving Institutions Program (NSF 1832511), expanding participation to students regardless of their financial situation.

SXU's Nursing programs in the School of Nursing and Health Sciences (SONHS) intentionally connect mission to both curricular and co-curricular activities. **The Systematic Evaluation Plan** explicitly requires that each program's mission be congruent with the University's mission and vision; these statements are reviewed and discussed annually or whenever a change occurs. The Undergraduate Nursing Program Director meets with all sophomore nursing students to review the Undergraduate Nursing Handbook, which includes the mission and the history of the Sisters of Mercy.





From left to right: Graham School of Management business students; exterior of the GSM building.

Prompted by the concern of the Sisters of Mercy for the poor, the nursing curriculum requires all sophomore nursing students to participate in the Missouri Association for Community Action (MACA) **Poverty Simulation**©. The simulation provides students an opportunity to assume the role of a low-income family member living on a limited budget. Students role-play the lives of children and family members from low-income families to experience the simulated realities of poverty. Volunteer nursing faculty and University peers assume community member roles representing one of the community resources and services utilized by the families during the simulation. Participants then engage in a debriefing period during which they reflect on their experiences.

Inspired by the global concerns of the Sisters of Mercy, the SONHS curriculum offers students a wide range of **study abroad opportunities**. Past courses have focused on health care in Turkey, Croatia, Italy and Ireland to increase cultural awareness, sensitivity and competency. These courses consist of a series of on-campus classes followed by an eight to 10-day trip to the country. During the didactic portion of the course, students explore the nursing, socioeconomic, artistic, religious, philosophical, historical and architectural aspects of the country. By way of group projects and presentations, students actively engage in learning about the country, its people, and in particular, its health care system. During the travel portion, students and accompanying faculty members visit notable sites and validate their learning. Educational opportunities at health care agencies and schools of nursing put SXU students in contact with students, nurses and faculty from the country they have studied. The study abroad program in SONHS has been maintained continuously since the first course was offered in 2003 and has increased the global awareness of nursing students.

The SONHS enjoys a collaborative relationship with the **University of Florence Department of Health Sciences**, which offers nursing faculty and students from SXU the opportunity to travel to Italy to observe health care delivery in Meyer Children's Hospital. Meyer is a member of the European Network of Health Promoting Hospitals of the World Health Organization. Faculty and students meet with nurses and peers to discuss health, social-emotional and cognitive issues for pediatric patients, and common issues in nursing education from each country's perspective. In 2019, this collaborative relationship expanded to include a four-year renewable Agreement of Cultural and Scientific Cooperation between both institutions to exchange visits of teaching and research staff to promote courses, conferences, lectures, joint research projects and experiences.

For students who desire to pursue a major in business, the curriculum of the Graham School of Management (GSM) is informed and shaped by SXU's Catholic identity and Mercy mission. GSM courses employ a **standardized syllabus** that requires the implementation of course activities that help future business leaders develop ethical principles and values and contribute to the common good. Students enrolled in MKTG 350 (Digital Marketing) work in teams to develop marketing plans and materials to help promote local elementary schools. Students also create a digital media campaign to promote the Oak Lawn Library and its numerous services and events.

Regardless of their area of specialty, all GSM students are required to enroll in **Business Matters: An Introduction to Business (BUSP 101)**, which puts an emphasis on the Critical Concerns. Students explore how recent examples of unethical business practices are opposed to one or more of the Critical Concerns. Additionally, all GSM students must enroll in a career-preparation course titled **Achieving Career Excellence**. This course prepares students for success by having them discern the role of Mercy in their lives and careers. Students find examples of companies that demonstrate citizenship, community service and philanthropy, and discuss how they plan to merge citizenship, community service and philanthropy into their own careers.

The ethical concerns of the Sisters of Mercy are also part of the GSM curriculum for business students in their areas of specialty as they learn about codes of conduct in their respective fields. Both undergraduate and graduate students enroll in several courses across business areas emphasizing professional codes of conduct. Committed to these ethical concerns, GSM has partnered with the **Responsible Research for Business and Management (RRBM)**, an organization dedicated to inspiring, encouraging, and supporting credible and useful research in the business and management disciplines

B. HIRING, ORIENTATION AND ONBOARDING

Mission is woven into the hiring, orientation and onboarding practices of SXU for prospective and current staff, faculty and student employees. Before applying, prospective employees become familiar with SXU's mission, core values and commitment to diversity as each are integrated into the SXU's Human Resources web page, job postings, the Staff and Student Employment Handbooks, and student employment trainings. The first module of the **student employment training** is dedicated to introducing newly hired student employees to the mission and core values. These values are also featured throughout the remaining modules.

It is standard for SXU job postings for faculty and staff to explain SXU's commitment to diversity and its Catholic heritage. Such language reads:

> Saint Xavier University is committed to diversity and encourages applications from individuals with a wide variety of backgrounds and experiences. The University affirms its position as a Catholic institution, inspired by the heritage of the Sisters of Mercy, and asserts its right to employ persons who subscribe to the mission, vision and core values of the University.
>
> Saint Xavier University is an Equal Opportunity Employer that makes all decisions regarding recruitment, hiring, promotions and all other terms and conditions of employment without discrimination on the grounds of race, color, creed, sex, religion, national or ethnic origin, age, physical or mental disability, veteran status or other factors protected by law. Hiring decisions will be based on the bona fide occupational qualifications of each applicant.

Interviews for full-time faculty include a **pre-interview regarding mission** with the Dean and an in-person meeting with the Executive Director for Mission and Heritage (EDMH). Additionally, new faculty and adjunct orientations include a presentation about SXU's Mercy mission.

Beginning in 2020, the EDMH began offering **quarterly mission orientation sessions** for newly hired employees. Participants watch "In God Alone" and two short videos about the history of the Sisters of Mercy's roles in health care and education in the United States. They are also introduced to a short history of Saint Xavier and are welcomed as participants in SXU's mission work. Moreover, newly hired staff are greeted by the Staff Council president and provided introductory resources and guidance for becoming involved in the University community, demonstrating a community of care.

C. ONGOING FORMATION FOR MISSION

STRIVE 2025: Pathways to Institutional Excellence, Accountability and Sustainability launched as the University's strategic plan in 2019 following Board of Trustees approval. Four foundational principles support five STRIVE 2025 strategic plan pillars. These key features, mission, students, performance and SXU's ability to remain financially sustainable, are the primary considerations for proposal evaluations across the institution. The Strategic Planning Core Steering Committee guides the work of pillar-based groups, each comprised of faculty and staff representatives from across the University. In fiscal year 2020, as the pillar groups worked independently and the process unfolded, overlapping interests among them became clear. In order to enhance efficiencies in collaboration, some groups were combined, each of which is now co-chaired by an academic dean. These groups collaborate to establish priorities based on the goals outlined in STRIVE 2025 and solicit proposals from the academic and operational areas of the University.

Four groups merged to develop and execute pillar objectives:

- **Pillar 1:** Mission Integration Across the University and **Pillar 3:** Community Engagement combined to form **Living our Mission and Connecting to the Community**.
- **Pillar 2:** SXU Educates for Competence, Character, Compassion and Career Success and **Pillar 5:** Innovation combined to form **Achieve and Maintain Financial Stability**.
- **Pillar 4: Invest in Mission-Critical Human and Physical Resources** continues in its original form.



Mother McAuley stained glass window

The EDMH chairs SXU's Mission Integration Committee.
In keeping with the required foci in the CMHE Mission Document, the Mission Integration Committee created the **SXU Mission Guide** (PDF), which cross-references CIT, Catholic social teaching (CST), the works of Mercy, the Critical Concerns, SXU core values and the SXU mission statement for the sake of demonstrating their close relationship and intersection. The Mission Guide will be used in hiring, onboarding new employees, staff development initiatives, and presentations to academic departments by the Deans for current faculty.

To further mission education, the EDMH makes mission presentations to the Board of Trustees and the Senior and Extended Leadership Teams. These groups are currently reading and discussing Pope Francis' newest encyclical "Fratelli Tutti." Additionally, the EDMH offers a mission presentation at Faculty Convocation every fall. The EDMH added quotes from the Bible and the writings of Catherine McAuley to the Core Values web page to make the relationship between the core values and SXU's Catholic and Mercy identity explicit.

Saint Xavier has been the recipient of several grants from the **Lilly Foundation** in recent years, which have been used to advance mission education. Two small grants from the Lilly Fellows Program in the Humanities and the Arts have funded two faculty development programs in response to changes within the General Education Program in order to promote mission across the curriculum.

The two Lilly programs were designed to steward specific requirements promoting ethical decision making and the history and charism of the Sisters of Mercy. Lilly Foundation funding brought together full-time and adjunct faculty to

consider these characteristics and to wrestle with how to understand these traditions and their implications. Evidence of this work is provided in student success, as the pass rate for the First-Year Seminar rose from 71% in the fall of 2018 to 85% in the fall of 2019.

A Lilly-funded program titled **"Inspired by Mercy: Scholarly Conversations on the Sisters of Mercy Critical Concerns"** examines the Critical Concerns as a lens through which faculty can engage and explore the intersection of Christian thought and practice with academic vocations across the disciplines. Drawing from the expertise and strengths of faculty co-leads, mid-career faculty participants across the disciplines will share how they connect Critical Concerns and the Mercy tradition to their own professions, vocations and teaching. Faculty co-leads will create a video-storytelling series demonstrating faculty's relationship to the Critical Concerns. This component will cultivate a lively and interactive discussion of Christian thought and practice, while serving as a lasting catalogue that can be accessed and used in the future.

Another Lilly-funded program, **Mentoring for Mission**, formally introduces faculty to CIT, CST, the history and charism of the Sisters of Mercy, and to SXU's identity as a Catholic university. The program is focused on faculty who have been at SXU for fewer than three years and is designed as a study of Catholic higher education, the vocation of the college professor in a Catholic university and Mercy identity in higher education.

In June 2021, faculty, staff and Board of Trustee members are invited to participate in an **Exploring the Mercy Mission** program, also funded by the Lilly Fellows. Four half-day sessions will be presented on Mercy history, present ministry and mission.

The **Mercy Scholars Program**, funded by the Sisters of Mercy West Midwest, is intended to provide support and meaningful discourse regarding the Critical Concerns for participating students. The 2020-2021 academic year marks the fifth year of funding for this program, and the steadfast support of the Sisters of Mercy allows SXU to provide five students with scholarships each year. Highlighted topics of interest identified by students over time have included: preservation of the earth through the development of a monarch butterfly garden on campus, increasing student and community awareness of violence and assault through a panel discussion on domestic violence, and heightening awareness of DACA resources through the development of online informational pages.

The Den, the online system for managing student organization activities, allows students to track formative co-curricular activities across more than 40 registered student organizations (RSOs) and see campus news and information about upcoming events. In fall 2020, SXU began an add-on subscription to The Den for GivePulse, which allows users to identify service opportunities and track their participation in service activities.

D. SPACE, ART AND SYMBOLISM

Saint Xavier's Catholic identity and Mercy heritage are affirmed through various symbols, fixtures and sites. One of the oldest artifacts on campus, the **Academy Bell**, survived the Chicago Fire of 1871 and its tintinnabulation can still be heard on campus. Campus visitors will see SXU's Catholic identity assimilated into the bricks of various walking paths such as the **Mercy Heritage Walk** and several physical representations of figures including Mary (Our Lady), Mother Catherine McAuley, Mother Frances Xavier Warde, Saint Francis Xavier and Bishop Quarter. Student ambassadors provide campus tours for prospective students and families; tour routes are intentional and scripted to include key heritage locations and symbols. Various spaces and buildings are named after the Sisters such as the Warde Academic Center, O'Brien Hall, Lake Marion and the O'Grady Center.

The **Mercy Ministry Center** (MMC) physically manifests the raison d'être of Saint Xavier University: an educational ministry of the Catholic Church. As such, the Offices of the President (Chief Mission Officer), Provost (Chief Academic Officer), Mission and Heritage, and Campus Ministry are located together, adjacent to the McDonough Chapel, also housed within the MMC.



From left to right, top row: The "wisdom" pillar of the Warde Academic Center is the goal of a Saint Xavier education; student art on display at SXU Gallery; McDonough Chapel/Mercy Ministry Center. From left to right bottom row: "Our Lady" statue at Mary's Circle; Mercy Heritage Walk; 49th Street Gateway Arch

Symbolism is used throughout physical spaces to elicit reflection of the University history and heritage. One example is the **49th Street Gateway Arch**, which represents the past and future of Saint Xavier. The main entrance of the Warde Academic Center features flags and embellishments highlighting the eight core values of the University, and its pillars symbolize the trivium and quadrivium that make up the curriculum.

A commitment to the Mercy heritage can be found in classrooms around the campus. Crucifixes designed by the Spanish artist Nassio de Valencia are affixed in all classrooms. A statue of Mary, titled **"Our Lady,"** designed by former chairperson of Saint Xavier's Art and Design Department Linae Frei '58, was first dedicated in 1964. The original sculpture was made possible by the generosity of alumni, friends and supporters who underwrote the project by purchasing square inches of land at the west end of the campus lake for $1 each. The first home of "Our Lady" came to be known as Our Lady's Acre.

After 20 years of exposure to the elements, the much weathered "Our Lady" was restored and refurbished by master craftsman and renowned sculpture conservator Andrej Dajnowski. In 1997, it was moved to its current location by the west entrance in Mary's Circle. The circular plaza framing the statue contains bricks purchased in memory of loved ones and in tribute to cherished mentors.

In addition to Mother McAuley and Mother Warde, Saint Xavier also honors its Chicago Sisters in paintings and photographs across campus. A new digital monitor in the MMC vestibule plays the names and pictures of founding Sisters as well as those who have served Saint Xavier on its present campus. Artwork from Sisters and former students is featured in the Robert and Mary Rita Murphy Stump Library.

The **SXU Gallery**, located in the Warde Academic Center, hosts professional art exhibitions that demonstrate the Mercy mission as reflected in the arts. Exhibits included over the last 30 years intentionally address social and environmental concerns and use art as a call to action for viewers. Past exhibits, including the 2016 display commemorating SXU's 170th anniversary, have featured artwork of the Sisters of Mercy, while more recent showcases highlight artwork focused on migration, Latinx identity, women's issues and war/nonviolence.

The mission and commitment to Catholic identity is frequently incorporated into imagery, printed materials and the University website. Prospective students are introduced to the heritage of the institution in recruitment materials. While visiting the Office of Admission, they become familiar with a timeline mural known as the **history wall**. Digital monitors across campus highlight the University mission and core values, featuring quotes from prominent Mercy heritage historical figures.

E. WORSHIP AND REFLECTION

During the academic year, Mass is held every weekday at noon and on Sunday evenings. In summer 2020, SXU began offering **virtual prayer** in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. All are invited to gather virtually to pray a shortened form of Liturgy of Hours for the community and the world.

Saint Xavier offers events to nurture the spiritual lives of faculty and staff. In fall 2020, an employee **interfaith book club** was started to encourage dialogue and provide a space to share spiritual insights in an interreligious format. A group of employees also gathers weekly to pray the rosary for the community. In February 2020, 15 employees gathered for the first faculty/staff retreat on different styles of prayer. The practice of beginning meetings with a prayer or reflection is frequent across campus.

Official University events such as the **Medallion Ceremony** for new students and Commencement include worship and reflection as an integral component of the occasion. Discipline-specific ceremonies incorporate elements of worship and reflection. For example, sophomore II nursing students participate in a **Dedication Ceremony** which calls them to commit to compassionate care as they embark on clinical experiences. Graduating nursing students participate in a **Pinning Ceremony** during which the pins are blessed and graduates and nurses present participate in the blessing of the hands. Similarly, the **Education Pinning Ceremony** celebrates the graduates of the education program, blessing them and reminding them of their contributions to carrying forward the Mercy legacy of attending to the uneducated.

Peer ministers host weekly faith-sharing groups titled **Commuter Corner** and **V3's**, in honor of SXU's Latin motto, *Via, Veritas, Vita*, allowing students from many religious and cultural backgrounds to come together and learn from peer ministers and each other through activities, music, artwork and readings.

Off-campus student retreats are held each semester during which students can concentrate on themselves, allowing them to grow spiritually, reflect and strengthen relationships with their peers and leaders. In conjunction with other Catholic institutions, SXU offers a **Busy Person's Retreat**. Peer ministers coordinate additional retreats, such as the Silent Retreat, Outdoor Retreat and Late Night V3's.

Students, faculty and staff organize an annual fall **Spanish Mass**, inviting students and their families to participate. Additionally, each December, the University hosts a **Virgin de Guadalupe Mass**. In response to COVID-19, peer ministers created a virtual bilingual rosary prayer in Spanish and English. The University welcomes religious diversity and provides additional spaces for prayer and reflection, including the Muslim Prayer Room and Meditation Room.

F. ENGAGEMENT IN COMMUNITY AND CELEBRATIONS

Mission animates University-wide celebrations such as **New Student Induction**, which marks the beginning of the student journey, and **Commencement**, which commemorates their status as Mercy alumni called to serve the common good. These events energize students and their families, faculty and staff as they share SXU's Mercy message of hope with the wider community.

Other events and rituals held throughout the year offer opportunities to refresh and nurture the University community. Among these is the **First Friday Tea**, hosted by the Office for Mission and Heritage, which allows community members to socialize and reflect on a mission-themed exhibit or presentation.

Mercy Week is a series of events marking the new academic year and serving to renew and remind the community of SXU's Mercy heritage. Its centerpiece, **Spirit of Mercy Day**, commemorates the founding of the Sisters of Mercy and marks the opening of the House of Mercy in Dublin on September 24, 1827. The Mass of the Holy Spirit is celebrated at noon, a time during which classes are not held so that faculty, staff and students may attend. Sisters of Mercy are invited and attend as honored guests.

During the week's **Commissioning of Leaders**, student leaders ring the Academy Bell to symbolize their commitment to service leadership. Faculty and staff join them in prayer and pledge to promote personal and professional growth, compassion, and respect. Other events include a campus walking tour to visit significant sites, honoring the early Sisters of Mercy who were referred to as "the walking nuns."

In mid-spring, Saint Xavier observes both **Mission Day** and **We Are SXU Day**, both intended to emphasize the University mission and core values in different ways.

Mission Day calls attention to the University's mission statement in a campus-wide observance focused on the concluding phrase of the University mission statement, charging community members to "serve wisely and compassionately in support of human dignity and the common good." A highlight of the day is the recognition of one faculty member, one staff member and one student, each of whom exemplify living the University's mission. The Faculty Mission and Service Award goes to a faculty member, the Sister Isidore Perrigo Mission Service Award is given to a staff member and the Mother Paulita Morris award is given to a student.

We Are SXU Day is a 24-hour participation-driven effort to celebrate SXU's long history of providing a quality Mercy education and dedicated service to students and the community. Focused on generating both school spirit as well as scholarship contributions, the entire campus community is invited to join the celebration. Throughout the day, a fundraising campaign supports student scholarships.

Mission informs professional development and personal well-being activities. For example, the **Service Excellence** initiative is designed to improve interactions with students, visitors and each other by holding the institution accountable for living out the core values of respect, compassion, service and excellence. Workshops highlighting these standards are routinely conducted for faculty and staff. Other programs include **Wellness Wednesdays**, hosted by the Counseling Center, the annual **Health Fair** and spiritual retreats.









Images from top to bottom: SONHS Pinning Ceremony 2020; Mission Day Awards 2018; Commissioning of Leaders bell ringing event in 2020; New Student Induction 2018

Faculty, staff and student recognition programs hold an important place in the continuing mission formation of the University community. In addition to the three Mission Day Awards for living the mission, the Office of the President initiated two additional employee awards: The **President's Faculty and Staff Excellence Awards** were established to recognize one faculty and one staff member who live the mission daily and serve the entire SXU community with distinction. The University celebrates faculty and staff through the **Paws for Applause and Department of the Year** programs, where colleagues and students nominate an employee or unit for exceeding expectations for quality service while embodying the mission.

The **Scarlet & Gray Awards** ceremony offers an occasion for faculty and staff to recognize outstanding students, student leaders and student groups for their significant contributions to the University, commitment to service, and dedication to advancing SXU's mission and core values. Students who complete the **Cougars LEAD Leadership Certificate**, a program designed around the core values of hospitality, diversity, service, learning for life and excellence, also are recognized among Scarlet & Gray awardees. The highest student service honor, the President's Award for Service Leadership, is given to the student who embodies the core value of service. Past recipients have been involved in student organizations that participated in community-based service, social justice initiatives, and diversity and inclusion efforts.

Service as a core value is most associated with commitment to mission. Service occurs in every area of the University with outreach efforts that span across Chicago and into neighboring communities and abroad. Students and staff regularly participate in day trips to help at Catholic Charities locations, the Pacific Garden Mission and the Greater Chicago Food Depository and tend to the ecosystem by assisting at Sundown Meadow and taking care of animals at the Chicago Canine Rescue. Students have served at Misericordia, a Mercy ministry organization providing services to 600 children and adults with mild to profound developmental disabilities, by raising funds during its Heart of Mercy Days. Students have also collected and donated blankets to Ronald McDonald House Charities, while some faculty and alumni volunteer as first responders.

Spring break provides opportunities for out-of-state service trips. Students, faculty and staff regularly volunteer at the Jerusalem Farm in Missouri, the Glenmary Farm in Tennessee, the Motown Mission in Michigan and the Nazareth Farm in West Virginia. Volunteers work on sustainability projects, home repair, social justice efforts and economic disaster recovery. Each year, SXU offers students and staff an opportunity to travel to Belize to build a house for a family needing adequate shelter. The volunteers also spend time at a daycare center for children affected by HIV-AIDS. The Cougar Service Scholars program offers students additional service opportunities and many community members participate in other acts of service not directly associated with the University.

Students and faculty participate in service activities that connect what they are learning in their courses to real-world experiences. Faculty and students have organized and volunteered at weekend STEM enrichment classes at local churches. Student academic organizations and honor societies have volunteered to serve as science fair judges and give science demonstrations at area schools, state fair and national events.

The holidays offer additional opportunities for service. The Athletics Department facilitates an annual holiday giving event through which staff donate gifts for families at local elementary schools. The Graham School of Management staff donates Easter baskets to local emergency rooms, hospitals, fire departments, ambulance drivers and police officers. The School of Nursing and Health Sciences coordinates an ongoing Nursing Student Food Pantry to assist students in need. SXU's Student Nurses Association sets up monthly drives for student participation to collect coats, blankets, socks and other needed community items. The University Relations staff, SXU's marketing and communications office, collects non-perishable food items during the holidays to provide to a local pantry.

The pandemic has provided additional opportunities for community service. The University is proud to be partners with Country House Dining Services as SXU's dining services provider. During the State of Illinois stay-at-home order, new outreach efforts were put into place to respond to the needs of the greater community. Country House Dining





Left to right: Outdoor view of the Health Center and indoor waiting room of the Health Center

Services redirected campus food service to provide more than 100,000 meals to seniors, veterans and families in the area. These meals continue to be provided to more than 1,000 local grade school children through the USDA Nutrition Program.

Similarly, understanding that isolation and social distancing may create special barriers for the residents of Mercy Circle, the Information Technology staff loaned SXU iPads so that residents without technology could continue to communicate with their families.

Graham School of Management faculty provided first responders and families in need with gift baskets, personal toiletries and household necessities. One alumnus, volunteering on behalf of a local non-profit, organized an emergency food drive to feed 500 families, by contacting grocers to donate perishables and recruiting community partners to pack and distribute groceries.

The **University Health Center** and the **Ludden Speech and Language Clinic**, by their own purpose and charge, are uniquely and routinely guided by Mercy through dedication to the mission.

While initially intended to care for SXU students only, the SXU Health Center services now extend to the greater community, including faculty, staff, Sisters of Mercy and area residents across the lifespan. Community patients accounted for 71% of all served in 2020. Nurse practitioners staff serve as primary health care providers to assess, diagnose and treat common health problems as well as promote health and wellness.

Named for its founder, Sister Mary Antonine Ludden, R.S.M., the Ludden Speech and Language Clinic serves approximately 250 clients per year from the nearby community, providing no-fee speech and language evaluation and therapy across the lifespan. For more than 60 years, the clinic has served the southwest Chicago area, assisting thousands of children and adults with speech and language disorders. Ludden Clinic's faculty and students provide regular speech-language therapy services at two local Catholic schools and screen preschoolers and kindergarten-age students at several local Catholic schools.

For both of these units, the pandemic presented new demands and obstacles in continuing to provide services. By adding telemedicine services, hybrid CPR training, on-site COVID-19 testing and contact tracing, the health center ensured continued service to the community. The health center is a COVID-19 vaccination site for the City of Chicago, offering about 300 Moderna vaccines weekly to community seniors, essential workers and teachers since January. The health center delivers health care with dignity for the elderly by offering live-person scheduling for patients with limited technical skills or no internet access and has prioritized vaccine appointments for the most vulnerable populations and offered optional in-car vaccination services for patients with limited mobility.

Similarly, the Ludden Clinic has continued services using a specialized version of telehealth and by retrofitting the clinic with protective barriers and other COVID-19 safety measures.

The health center manages community outreach programs, including ad hoc and ongoing health services provided at local employer sites. Ad hoc programs include screenings at community health fairs, presentations to senior groups and educational opportunities for elementary students. Past programs have included a tabletop teaching program on tobacco cessation and vaping at District 124 Junior High School and an assembly hall teaching event on vaping for middle school students at Saint Barnabas Elementary School. Blood pressure screenings took place at the Evergreen Park Senior Health Fair, the SXU Community Health Fair and Elim Christian School for Children with Disabilities.

The health center provided on-site flu vaccines for staff at Brother Rice High School, Marist High School and Mother McAuley High School, as well as to Chicago-area businesses including Axion Risk Management, Keyser Industries, and nine locations of the Cook-Illinois School Bus Company. Staff will return to these sites to administer COVID-19 vaccines in 2021.

The health center delivers preventative and acute health care services on-site at four locations of the Cook-Illinois School Bus Company on an ongoing basis. The majority of the employees served are among the working poor. Some of these patients are homeless, uninsured and/or have significant health issues who did not have access to health care prior to SXU opening its clinic.

In June 2020, the health center opened two clinics at Smith Retirement Community locations. A School of Nursing and Health Sciences faculty member and family nurse practitioner (FNP) staff clinics each week for three hours providing on-site care to independent living residents. This site also provides clinical learning opportunities for nursing students (e.g., undergraduate nursing students have hosted blood pressure screening events). On-site flu shots administered to residents decreased the risk of COVID-19 exposure while assuring high flu vaccine rates amongst vulnerable populations.

G. SPONSORSHIP, CMHE AND ECCLESIAL RELATIONS

Saint Xavier is blessed to be on the same city block as **Mercy Circle**, a senior living community where many Sisters of Mercy reside, several of whom have long-standing ties to SXU as alumnae and former employees. President Joyner meets with the Sisters in the Chicago area periodically to update them on the successes and challenges facing SXU. These opportunities to visit are a wonderful way to honor the Sisters and their work while demonstrating all of the ways their legacy continues today. The Sisters frequently are honored guests at annual Mission and Spirit of Mercy Day celebrations. Programs in recent years have focused on gathering Sisters with new employees, members of the Senior Leadership Team and students. The University community recently celebrated the 20th anniversary of the naming of Lake Marion in honor of former biology professor, Marion Johnson, R.S.M., with a Mass and reception.

SXU's President and the Executive Director of Mission and Heritage are actively involved in CMHE annual gatherings as well as conference-wide affinity groups. SXU was also among four CMHE institutions including Carlow University, College of Saint Mary and Gwynedd Mercy University, to participate in the creation of a video production titled "Get Out the Vote With Mercy" in 2020. Collaborative efforts between Student Life and University Relations in October 2020 received accolades from CMHE for the resulting high-quality and artistic product.

Cardinal Cupich appointed President Joyner to The Archdiocese of Chicago Catholic School Board in 2019. Dr. Joyner began leading the Academic Excellence Committee of the Board in 2020 and currently serves on the Executive Committee. She also serves on the Board of St. Laurence High School, and chairs the Mission Effectiveness and Academic Committee. The SXU community was blessed to have Cardinal Cupich preside at Ash Wednesday Mass in 2019, as well as Bishop Wypych who participated in President Joyner's inauguration. In 2019, Bishop Gerald Kicanas presided at the commencement liturgy, delivered remarks at commencement and received a well-deserved honorary degree.

H. CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING IN ACTION

The fourth vow of the Sisters of Mercy to care for the poor, the sick and the uneducated is reflected deeply in the work of Saint Xavier, which pays particular attention to underserved populations, strives to foster equity and seeks to serve others and uphold the dignity of all people.

SXU serves a student population, the majority of whom are from low-income backgrounds (52% Pell-eligible) and/or are the first in their families to attend college (64.4%) and invests in their education through generous financial assistance. Merit scholarships are determined using a **holistic review** through which high school performance is weighted over standardized test scores. The University also developed a financial aid appeal process for both new and continuing students, by which undocumented students are reviewed for additional institutional aid in the form of **Financial Aid Mission Awards**. This mechanism assists students who are ineligible for federal financial aid. According to the federal website, CollegeNavigator.gov, SXU is the most affordable Catholic University in Illinois based on net cost of attendance.

The Office of Admission regularly hosts college preparation and college search workshops for area students, specifically those attending Chicago Public Schools (CPS) and served by community-based education and mentoring organizations. Recognizing that under-resourced high schools do not provide the same academic assets and support services as high schools located in more affluent communities and that ACT and SAT standardized tests have socioeconomic implicit biases; SXU undertakes a holistic application review to minimize the impact of the standardized test scores, which are no longer required for admission. The **Student Success Academy** (SSA) provides additional support for incoming first-year students who do not meet academic readiness benchmarks, based on high school GPA and courses taken in high school. SSA assigns academic coaches who deliver one-on-one academic attention and creates a social support network of peer mentors while building academic confidence to succeed in advanced college learning. Throughout the past three years, the Office of Admission implemented paperless operations to be more fiscally and environmentally responsible.

TRiO
STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

The University's **Transfer Student Services Center** facilitates partnerships with area community colleges, including several guaranteed admission agreements. SXU is a partner in the **Chicago Star Scholars** program, through which the Chicago Public Schools offers qualified CPS students with free tuition at one of the City Colleges of Chicago, by providing additional scholarship support for Star Scholars that matriculate to SXU to complete their degree. Student groups in need of additional assistance, such as student veterans and participants in the **TRIO Student Success Program**, which supports low-income and first-generation students, are given priority registration privileges to support their retention and progression toward a degree.

SXU's concern for the life and dignity of the human person, solidarity and service to the poor and vulnerable is evidenced by graduation rates of underrepresented nursing students. According to IBHE data on BSN degrees conferred, SXU ranked 10th in Illinois among 36 not-for-profit institutions for total number of degrees conferred and sixth for degrees conferred to underrepresented minorities. In 2019, underrepresented students constituted one in every four BSN degrees conferred; SXU ranked higher in the number of underrepresented BSN degrees conferred than at six of the eight public institutions in Illinois.

SXU is a federally designated **Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI)**, based on enrollment of Latinx and low-income students. Since 2010, the Latinx student population at SXU has increased by 148% and now forms more than 40% of the entire undergraduate student body. Recognizing that the majority of Latinx students are first-generation students from low-income backgrounds, SXU seeks to provide the academic and co-curricular support needed to ensure they cross the finish line. SXU received an inaugural **Title V Developing Hispanic-Serving Institutions grant** (P031S190311) from the U.S. Department of Education in 2019, which aims to improve the retention and

graduation rates of Latinx and low-income students as compared to their non-Latinx white peers. Most student service and support offices employ bilingual staff to be inclusive of Spanish-speaking students and their families. Several recruitment communications are translated, and orientation sessions are conducted in Spanish.

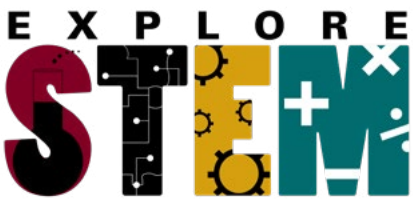
To eliminate retention and graduation gaps for African American and Black, Latinx and Pell grant recipients, SXU became an inaugural member of the **Illinois Equity in Attainment Initiative (ILEA)** among 29 peer schools. Under this initiative, SXU implemented **Emerging Scholars**, a mentoring program designed to increase a sense of belonging and improve retention and academic success of African American and Black students at SXU. As a result of the positive outcomes realized through Emerging Scholars, the University is planning to launch a Latinx counterpart to this program and will introduce it in fall 2021. To support low-income students, as measured by Pell eligibility, SXU revamped the student worker hiring process across the University to ensure priority for Federal Work Study student applicants.

University leadership announced 2020-2021 as a year of intense focus on anti-racism in response to this longstanding justice issue. Members of the President's Extended Leadership Team participated in readings and trainings focused on anti-racism led by the Center for Inclusive Excellence, and an appointed University Fellow surveyed staff and faculty to provide suggestions for improvements related to the African American and Black experience at SXU to bring forth equity and inclusion recommendations. The Center for Inclusive Excellence embarked on a **Racial Equity Landscape Review**, based on the Equity Scorecard developed by the Center for Urban Education, to assess climate and provide immediate and longitudinal action items across all University units. Staff Council implemented a standing agenda item dedicated to anti-racism and set aside time at meetings to discuss monthly readings related to the topic. Staff Council also facilitated a University-wide event over the summer of 2020 to discuss anti-racism and communicate ways to support community members. Staff Council members are currently working on an anti-racism statement to incorporate into their bylaws and exploring affinity groups to provide a support network for staff of similar identities.

Faculty initiated an **anti-racism faculty task force** in June 2020 to assess policies and practices that may perpetuate institutional racism at SXU, including hiring policies, curriculum, student experience, economic equality and student evaluations; and develop a team to review faculty-student interactions and suggest guidelines for improving relationships, hiring within departments and pedagogy. The task force is comprised of 16 faculty members, led by two faculty co-chairs. The task force began meeting in summer 2020, with an acute recognition of the graduation gap by race among students. From the outset, the task force identified the need to hire and support underrepresented faculty. In February 2021, the task force completed and submitted a report to Faculty Senate for review.

Faculty meetings for the College of Arts and Sciences during 2020-2021 have also focused on anti-racism, inclusive pedagogy and removing barriers to participation in high-impact practices. In spring 2020, the college produced a video for faculty development featuring alumni offering their experiences as students of color at SXU, including their interactions with faculty, staff and peers. Further discussions of actions to reduce implicit biases are ongoing.

The theme of 2021 Faculty Development Day was **Building Inclusive Courses**. Faculty presentations covered pedagogical principles and strategies to create an inclusive and equitable space for teaching and learning. Topics included anti-racism, trauma-informed pedagogy, implicit bias mitigation, holding difficult conversations, building social belonging, creating inclusive assignments and cultural competencies.



In 2020-2021, five SXU faculty and staff participated in the Certificate in College Teaching and Learning in HSI's through ESCALA Educational Services. This 27-hour course is designed to increase Latinx success through long-term professional development and coaching on culturally responsive instruction. Students are supported financially in high-impact research endeavors with faculty through the **Explore STEM** program, an HSI-STEM grant, funded through a National Science Foundation



Examples of Mercy in action at Saint Xavier University

(NSF 1832511). This program offers an eight-week summer fellowship for students to engage in one-on-one collaborative research with faculty. Student-faculty research collaborations allow students to develop their professional identity early on and help solidify their sense of belonging in their major with the goal of increasing the number of Latinx students majoring in STEM disciplines. Providing students with hands-on experience with research methods and professional writing supports retention in STEM and ultimately contributes to students' graduate careers.

The Robert and Mary Rita Murphy Stump Library offers resources to promote SXU's core values and the Critical Concerns. The library subscribes to **Ethic Newswatch**, which provides materials from ethnic and alternative journals, magazines and newspapers. Students explore this resource during The Examined Life (PHIL 140), a required course for all first-year and transfer students. The library's **Mercy Mission** web page features a curated list of mission-related resources and topics such as anti-racism and women in history.

SXU's Public Safety team added its name to the historic agreement between the Illinois National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the Illinois Association of Chiefs of Police (ILACP), which emphasizes the value of the life of every person and maintains that all individuals should be treated with dignity and respect. Under this agreement, Public Safety rejects discrimination toward any person based on race, ethnicity, religion, color, nationality, immigrant status, sexual orientation, gender, disability or familial status.

The Student Life and the Center for SUCCESS Offices provide staff, student employees and student leaders **Safe Zone Workshops** as a resource for effective LGBTQ awareness and ally training. Staff from various units across the University collaborate to plan and implement programming promoting and celebrating diversity. In 2021, the ILEA initiative along with the Center for Inclusive Excellence invited staff and faculty to participate in a professional development series titled **"Still I Rise"** to focus on creating and cultivating a racially inclusive campus environment. Staff and faculty culminate Black History Month with the annual African American Achievement Awards, which recognize the contributions and achievements of African American and Black students, faculty and staff.

Understanding that students may face challenging situations throughout their time at SXU, the institution strives to embody the spirit of Mercy compassion by creating a community of caring individuals who look out for and take care of one another. Through the **Care Team**, SXU offers a unified system to assess student concerns and provide resources during times of need. Together, the Care Team and Center for SUCCESS professionals design student resources, including academic and career development resources for diverse student populations and first-generation college students. Student support staff provide social work and mental health services to students as well as academic support initiatives to promote student success and increase retention. Students are provided one-on-one appointments and workshops. Plans for an on-campus food pantry, designed to address student food insecurity and championed by SXU Cougar Service Scholars student service program, are underway.

SXU's **Student Relief Fund**, which offers emergency financial aid to students in need, was prioritized in response to COVID-19. In recognition of the fact that certain students, including Dreamers and DACA students, were excluded from federal student relief funds disbursed through the CARES Act, University Advancement pivoted fundraising efforts to provide support for these students through the Student Relief Fund. Through grants, individual solicitations and a mini-campaign for Giving Tuesday Now, Advancement fundraised more than $35,000 for the fund. This represented the most successful year of fundraising for the Student Relief Fund since its inception and a 1,716% increase from the prior calendar year.

Alumni showcase the successful integration of mission in the manner by which they continue to live the mission after graduation. A self-study undertaken in 2019 reflects that at least 30% of BSN graduates entered service in federally designated medically underserved areas since 2016. The majority of these locations are within the Chicago metropolitan area and directly serve diverse populations. While the important work of these alumni is a source of pride, it is equally important to maintain meaningful connections with them after graduation. Counseling Center staff now offer services to alumni working on the front lines of the pandemic.

Reflecting its commitment to advancing the economic well-being of faculty and staff, Saint Xavier University prioritized employee compensation by implementing the first across-the-board base salary increases for faculty and staff in six years, the first increase of 2% or more in a decade. Further, the University initiated comprehensive faculty and staff wage analyses to study salary equity across the academy and provided equity adjustments to those employees who met performance expectations to the 33rd percentile of a comparator peer group. Finally, the University allocated funds for faculty and staff merit pools and instituted monetary-based excellence awards to recognize employees who consistently demonstrate performance excellence and contribute to advancing the Mercy mission.

III. MEASURING MISSION
INTEGRATION EFFECTIVENESS

A. ONBOARDING NEW STUDENTS TO CATHOLIC IDENTITY AND MERCY MISSION

1. Student Orientation

Via is the name given to the new student orientation program for first-year students as a tribute to the University motto, *Via, Veritas, Vita*. The three words are Latin for "the Way, the Truth and the Life" as it appears on the Saint Xavier University seal. Via – or "the Way" – helps students find their way as new members of the SXU community. The program is designed to make the transition to college life as smooth as possible by providing an overview of SXU's academic and co-curricular programs, University policies and extensive support services. Via introduces students to Saint Xavier's Catholic and Mercy heritage and the Sisters of Mercy. The orientation also offers students the opportunity to meet with new classmates, current SXU students, academic advisors and faculty. Students also plan their course schedule and register for their first semester.

After attending Via in summer 2020, offered in a virtual format due to COVID-19, all first-year students were asked to complete a 24-question evaluation survey, with several questions focused on mission. Results indicated that the virtual Via offering was highly effective with an overall program rating of good or excellent (84%). Survey data further demonstrated that the goal of having a good understanding of the mission and core values of SXU (93% agree or strongly agree), as well as the Sisters of Mercy and their heritage at SXU (84% agree or strongly agree), was met or exceeded. Students also indicated that they felt included in a diverse community of students (83% agree or strongly agree).

2. Transitions

Transitions is a one-credit course designed for first-year students to introduce them to the SXU community and develop an understanding of university expectations and life. An important aspect of this course is to introduce students to the Catholic and Mercy heritage of the University.

During the past three years, Transitions has undergone several changes in the course structure, including more focus on Mercy heritage and the Critical Concerns. In 2019, an essay on the Critical Concerns was required and students discussed the Sisters of Mercy and their ministries in greater depth. Students watched several short videos on the history of Catherine McAuley and the origins of the Sisters of Mercy. Students then spent several weeks discussing the Critical Concern of racism and examining the ways SXU is building a more inclusive, multiracial community of learners.

These improvements reflected in Transitions materials has resulted in an improvement in student perception of course effectiveness according to SEI (Student Evaluation of Instruction) data. In 2018, Transitions was rated as effective by 78.2% of the survey respondents. This improved to 84.5% in fall 2019 and to 93.9% effective in fall 2020. During the same timeframe, the student rating averaged 3.73/4 (4 indicating 'strongly agree') in referencing the discussion of Catholic identity and Mercy heritage.









Clockwise from top left image: Orientation student leader under the SXU arch; orientation student leaders display SXU's core values; students participate in Cougar Trax event; Via student tour

3. Philosophy 140 – The Examined Life

The Examined Life (PHIL 140 for first-year students; PHIL 150 for transfer students) is a three-credit required course for all students. The purpose of this course is to challenge students to think critically about what it means to be human. Students study and discuss primary source documents that focus on ethical and social issues related to the Critical Concerns. Philosophy faculty have taught this course since 2004. PHIL140/150, in conjunction with FYS 175, directly addresses SXU's mission to teach students to think critically.

According to SEI data from the 2018, 2019 and 2020 fall semesters, students' perceived effectiveness of the course improved. Students rated the effectiveness of the course on a 4-point Likert scale (4 is strongly agree). Between fall 2018 and fall 2019, the average rating for effectiveness increased from 3.56 (out of 4) to 3.73. The percent of respondents reporting the class as being effective (either a 3 or 4 rating) increased from 94.14% to 97.14%. From fall 2019 to fall 2020, the percent of students who found the course effective increased from 97.14% to 98.89%. It is also important to note that the percentage of students finding this course to be ineffective (rating of 1-Strongly Disagree or 2-Disagree) declined from fall 2019 (2.86%) to fall 2020 (1.11%). The implication of these findings is that despite the challenges and limitations presented by COVID-19, SXU faculty were able to maintain a high level of instructional effectiveness in these courses.

As technology, culture, current events and other variables have changed over the years, faculty members have worked together collaboratively to ensure that PHIL 140/150 developed to meet the needs of the time. As the course has adapted over the years, the focal point has been to prepare students for challenges of the present and future based on SXU's mission to educate students for competence, character and career success.

4. First-Year Seminar (FYS)

The First-Year Seminar (FYS 175) is an introduction to college-level learning. Starting in fall 2018, FYS has been offered exclusively as part of the Religious Studies program, in order to focus more closely on Catholic intellectual tradition (CIT), Mercy heritage and religious literacy. All FYS students critically analyze scripture and commentarial traditions in order to understand the relationship between faith and reason and devote concerted attention to the history and charism of the Sisters of Mercy.

From fall 2018 to fall 2020, SEI data for the FYS courses improved from 3.47/4 to 3.59/4 in meeting course objectives. Additionally, the course was rated as 77.6% effective in fall 2018 as compared to 82.1% in fall 2019 and 90.1% in fall 2020. The Religious Studies Department developed common pedagogical practices across course sections as it relates to the CIT and the Sisters of Mercy since 2018. Furthermore, they have shared successes and challenges with colleagues to improve the students' course experience. SEI data supports this positive evolution of the course over time.

Due to the nature of the course and its distinct focus on Mercy mission, two questions unique to FYS were added to SEIs for fall 2019 and spring 2020. The ratings scale ranged from 1 to 4; 4 indicates strongly agree. Questions and average responses for these semesters are as follows: Question 25, *This course helped me to reflect on the Sisters of Mercy and their Critical Concerns* (3.08 2019F, 3.36 2020S) and Question 26, *This course improved my ability to appreciate and interpret the Bible* (3.25 2019F, 3.45 2020S). From these two semesters, students rated their understanding of the Sisters of Mercy and bible studies on average as agree to strongly agree. This is consistent with the data presented earlier describing the effectiveness of the course.

B. THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE

SXU has been a member of the **National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)** Catholic consortium for many years. Participation allows students who take NSSE to respond to 19 additional survey items prepared by a longstanding Catholic consortium of more than 50 other institutions. Trend analyses covering the years 2016 through 2020 reveal that a large majority of both first-year students and graduating seniors (80% - 85%) believe that the heritage of the founding religious order is evident at SXU, and these ratings are on par with those from the NSSE national sample. Analyses also reveal that three-quarters of students believe that their experiences at SXU have made them more aware of social justice issues in the world. These are two multi-year indicators of institutional success in promulgating principles of Catholic social teaching (CST) and Mercy heritage across the curriculum.

Other multi-year analyses of NSSE data revealed facets of the student experience which differ from national norms. On the positive side, SXU students believe they are encouraged to develop an appreciation of diversity to a greater extent than indicated by students attending other Catholic institutions. SXU students also report greater acceptance of students with different sexual orientations than elsewhere. This is not surprising given SXU's invitational approach to all members of the campus community. However, NSSE data reveal that students are less likely than their peers attending other Catholic institutions to experience opportunities for volunteering and community service, which are hallmarks of Catholic colleges and universities. These apparent gaps in the student experience may stem from greater financial and family responsibilities shouldered by SXU students compared with national samples. Quite simply, SXU students have job and family responsibilities, which limit their time and energy for meaningful engagement in volunteerism and other discretionary activities. The Mission Integration Committee is examining methods to expand opportunities for meaningful community service that recognizes the lived experiences of SXU's student population.

Delivering on the promise of SXU's Mercy heritage has been and continues to be an important focus of staff. To this end, the University launched a **Service Excellence** initiative in 2017. A series of service principles were articulated that embrace the core values of respect, collaboration, responsiveness and effectiveness. These principles are incorporated into annual staff performance reviews and are addressed in training workshops held throughout the year. The positive impact of these activities is evidenced in the NSSE survey items asking students to rate the quality of their interactions with staff in administrative offices. Beginning in 2019 and continuing in 2020, first-year student ratings of

interactions with staff were significantly higher than ratings from prior years and significantly higher than ratings at other Catholic institutions.

C. STUDENT ENGAGEMENT IN MISSION-RELATED ACTIVITIES

Survey data from entering students revealed that more than half of SXU first-year students (54%) believe that participating in community service and working for social justice are important components of their faith. The same proportion also indicated that they had prior engagement in service learning and/or community service through local organizations prior to enrollment at SXU. NSSE classifies college courses that include community service and engagement in community problem-solving as high-impact practices, which strengthen the quality of the college experience. However, NSSE annual reports indicate that engagement in courses with components of service learning is significantly below levels of engagement at comparable Catholic colleges and universities. A 2020 NSSE report found that 53% of SXU first-year students experienced community-based learning in their courses compared with 69% in the national Catholic institution sample; and that 68% of SXU seniors had courses with community-based learning compared with 79% at other Catholic institutions. These findings are currently under review by members of the Mission Integration Committee.

Staff across units are developing new strategies to engage more students in co-curricular activities, including community service and social justice activities. NSSE reports reveal that SXU students have less discretionary time and fewer resources to participate in co-curricular activities, which are known to enhance the overall quality of their educational experience. These new strategies allow students to join co-curricular modules such as Cougars LEAD, which give them greater flexibility for participation and additional opportunities for reflection. Students can track their own co-curricular path with information on more than 40 registered student organizations (RSOs) and see campus news and information about upcoming events via The Den. The average weekly participation in activities rose in 2020 from 5 hours to 5.7 hours with 60% of first-year students reporting some level of involvement in co-curricular activities. In comparison, 71% of entering students at other Catholic colleges and universities report some level of involvement with an average of 6.7 hours weekly. More work is necessary to raise the levels of engagement in mission-related activities both within and outside of course learning activities.

D. STUDENT UNDERSTANDING OF CATHOLIC IDENTITY AND MERCY MISSION

In fall 2020, SXU added a new set of metrics to the existing array of mission-related data elements through participation in the **Catholic Identity and Mission Assessment (CIMA)** national research project sponsored by the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities (ACCU). The aim of this project is to create a set of valid tools for measuring the extent to which Catholic mission and identity are expressed on campus and assimilated by students. One survey instrument asks first-year students about their religious backgrounds and beliefs, their knowledge of CIT and CST and their opinions on topics such as leadership and service connected with Catholic institutional mission. Nearly 200 first-year students completed the ACCU survey. Their responses were compared with those of nearly 5,200 first-year students at Catholic colleges and universities during the same period of time.

Several survey items asked students to rate their level of understanding of Catholic mission and other topics associated with Catholic identity. Response options asked students to assess their ability to discuss with someone else their understanding of SXU's mission and related Catholic topics. Results demonstrate that by midway into their first semester, more than one-half (56%) of students felt that they understood SXU's mission well enough to do so, a response that was modestly higher than the national Catholic sample (50%). There were much lower levels of understanding expressed about other related topics, such as: CIT (24%); CST (27%); Catholic Moral Teaching (27%); and Evolution of the Catholic Church (33%). Student responses were on par with those in the ACCU national sample. These findings indicate that awareness and familiarity with Catholic identity and mission is much higher than self-assessments of understanding and that SXU is doing as well as other Catholic colleges and universities participating in the ACCU research project.

The ACCU survey also asked students to rate their level of interest in other topics related to Catholic identity and mission. At the top of the list was the survey item "relationship between my career and my vocation…" (78% indicated quite a bit or very much), followed by "the dignity of every human being…" (66%), "challenges faced by the poor" (66%) and "promoting peace among nations" (63%). Much lower ratings of interest were documented for "founding religious order of this institution" (43%), "cultural issue of the question of God" (35%) and "religions other than Catholicism" (33%). Results will be reviewed by academic leaders regarding placement of these topics across disciplines in order to provide greater mission integration both within and across the curricula.

E. DIVERSITY AND EQUITY – CATHOLIC SOCIAL ACTION

SXU is one of the most diverse institutions of higher learning in the greater Midwest according to U.S. News & World Report (2021). This particular ranking is based on the proportional mix of students by ethnic/race categories and not on the total numbers of students from underrepresented, minoritized groups. In fall 2020, SXU's undergraduate population was 44% Latinx, 37% white, 12% African American and Black, and 7% other. However, degree attainment and graduation rates among these population segments do not reflect this proportional makeup. Entering first-year students who are not athletes or who are not part of the federal TRIO program have significant gaps in four- and six-year graduation rates. Such gaps are not uncommon and exist at colleges and universities across the country. This reality led SXU to join a statewide effort to remove or reduce these gaps by the year 2025. In 2018, SXU became one of 29 postsecondary institutions to join the **Illinois Equity in Attainment (ILEA)** initiative in collaboration with Partnership for College Completion (PCC).





Top to bottom: Saint Francis Xavier statue inside chapel foyer; a student with her family at Cougar Trax

Participation in ILEA entailed the development of new initiatives in support of African American and Black, Latinx, and Pell students, guided by a campus-wide committee co-chaired by one faculty and one staff member. One such initiative is an intensive mentoring program for African American and Black students known as **Emerging Scholars**, which has contributed to a positive impact on retention. After its first full year of operation in 2019-20, the overall first-to-second year retention of new African American and Black first-year students rose from an average of 62% to 74%. The retention rate of students who participated in Emerging Scholars was 90% compared with 61% of those not in the program. Gains in retention among program participants was evident across all academic profiles. While this is a promising start, more must be done to remove barriers to degree attainment.

The **Comprehensive, Aligned Supports for Attainment (CASA)** initiative, funded by a Developing Hispanic-Serving Institutions grant from the U.S. Department of Education, is employing methods to remove gaps in retention and graduation, with special focus on Latinx and low-income students. CASA has initiated the **Student Success Academy**, a one credit class taught by the Director of Student Support and two Academic Support Coaches. The program is designed to support a select group of incoming first-year students, providing additional resources in reading, critical thinking and math skills at the college level. The academy also provides mentoring and small group learning communities. Sixty-six first-year students participated in the fall 2020 academy. Analysis of spring 2021 enrollments revealed that 82% of the most vulnerable who participated in the academy returned for the spring, compared with 75% of the most vulnerable students who did not participate in the academy. Analysis of first semester GPAs found



Interior chapel with baptismal fountain in the foreground; Paschal candle; President Joyner speaking at an event in the chapel

that participants had a significantly better average GPA (2.79) than non-participants (2.33). Efforts are currently underway to carry these positive results through the next year and to expand participation in future years.

F. FUTURE ASSESSMENT OF CATHOLIC IDENTITY AND MISSION

SXU joined the ACCU research project in fall 2020 to provide a baseline of new information that will guide future plans for stronger and more comprehensive integration of Catholic identity and mission assessment. Survey data found that eight out of every 10 first-year students expect to enroll in courses that integrate content with consideration of mission, personal growth and values. Students also expect to take courses that examine the ethical and social justice implications of course content and provide opportunities to leverage both their intellect and imagination to solve problems. Survey results will guide plans for a more comprehensive assessment of Catholic identity and mission, which will include longitudinal tracking of student growth and development as they move through their academic studies. SXU will administer the senior equivalent of the same survey this spring for graduating students.

IV. MISSION INTEGRATION
EFFECTIVENESS AT SAINT XAVIER UNIVERSITY

The evidence gathered and presented in Saint Xavier's inaugural CMHE self-study reveals key insights about mission integration effectiveness at the University, highlighting mission-centered successes and bringing to light areas for further reflection and continued improvement.

Saint Xavier University honors the rich heritage and legacy of the Sisters of Mercy through its physical environment and traditions in extraordinary ways throughout the year. The University's attentiveness to advancing diversity, equity and inclusion is noteworthy. SXU's strategic enrollment management and financial aid approach has resulted in the recruitment of two of the largest, most diverse classes in SXU history. Multiple, intentional student success efforts surrounding retention and completion are moving the institution forward in equity-informed ways.

The University strives to create a mission-focused learning organization that educates students for competence, character and career success within the context of a sustainable financial model. Consistent with this aspiration, SXU remains deeply committed to the development of the whole student through meaningful curricular and co-curricular experiences informed by its Catholic, Mercy heritage.

The University's ongoing efforts take place at every level to:

- ensure that each of the CMHE mission integration core areas work together to create a fully mission-focused institution;
- address the foundational issues of hiring, onboarding, ongoing professional development, and performance evaluation, essential to nurturing institutional mission;
- create mission-infused curricular and co-curricular offerings; and
- systematize assessment to monitor the deepening of mission engagement and understanding over time.

Through the self-study exercise, it has become clear that two primary areas for growth are **student life** and **faculty and staff development** related to incorporating Catholic principles and Mercy ideals across the curriculum. SXU's commitment to serve its student population authentically guides the University to evaluate data, which consistently suggests directing a significant investment in the first and second years. The University understands the need to extend these efforts throughout the SXU journey. Moving forward, SXU will establish goals to improve the mission-centered student experience across all years and aspects of the University.

V. LOOKING AHEAD

To accomplish this Mercy-inspired vision of institutional success, SXU's priorities are geared toward becoming even more mission-focused, student-centered, performance-based and financially sustainable. The University recognizes and acknowledges the depth of cultural change required to achieve this vision and secure the future of the institution.

Several key themes emerge. In relation to SXU's core values, SXU gives the strongest support to service and diversity, while upholding the Critical Concerns of the Sisters of Mercy by putting great effort into anti-racism both in awareness and in action of improving institutional systems, practices and policies to eliminate gaps in retention and graduation rates.

The self-study also reveals where greater attention is needed. The Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities (ACCU) Catholic Identity and Mission Assessment (CIMA) revealed that students do not understand Catholic intellectual tradition (CIT) and Catholic social teaching (CST), two areas of emphasis expressed by the Conference for Mercy Higher Education. Likewise, while there is great emphasis on service, students have indicated that they experience fewer opportunities for volunteering, community service and service learning than other students responding to NSSE data.

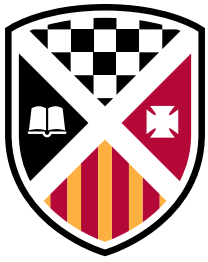
Using this data, one important initiative will be the implementation and use of the SXU Mission Guide. Since SXU demonstrates a strong commitment to service, diversity and ending racism, it will be valuable to begin there to demonstrate how these issues have deep resonances in CIT and CST. Similarly, the ACCU CIMA revealed that students expressed a great deal of interest in the dignity of the human person, challenges faced by the poor, and promoting peace among nations, which again, have deep resonance with CIT and CST. Employees of SXU need to be conversant and confident about CIT and CST so that they may convey these principles to our students.

The need of a stronger understanding of CIT and CST is also in accord with another issue SXU experiences, namely, a strong connection to our Mercy identity but less of a connection to our Catholic identity. It would be useful for the SXU community to understand how the ideals and commitments of the Sisters of Mercy come from their Catholic heritage.

SXU is already seeing an improvement in service opportunities with the ability to track service on the Den and the addition of GivePulse to generate more ideas for service opportunities. As service and service opportunities increase across campus, it will be important to make the explicit connection, not just to SXU's core values, but to the Catholic understanding of service, particularly in light of CST.

SXU is heartened by the comprehensive efforts of many across the institution who contributed to this self-study. This process revealed the shared commitment to mission integration across the University and provided a welcomed opportunity to celebrate the noble legacy of the Sisters of Mercy.

SXU looks forward to welcoming and collaborating with the CMHE visiting team to strengthen existing mission efforts across the University community



Saint Xavier
UNIVERSITY