

SAINT XAVIER UNIVERSITY MISSION GUIDE



Saint Xavier
UNIVERSITY



**Presented to the Conference for Mercy Higher Education and the
Catholic Identity and Mercy Mission Accountability Process**

March 15, 2021

SXU MISSION CHART

SXU – Catholic and Mercy – Living our Mission

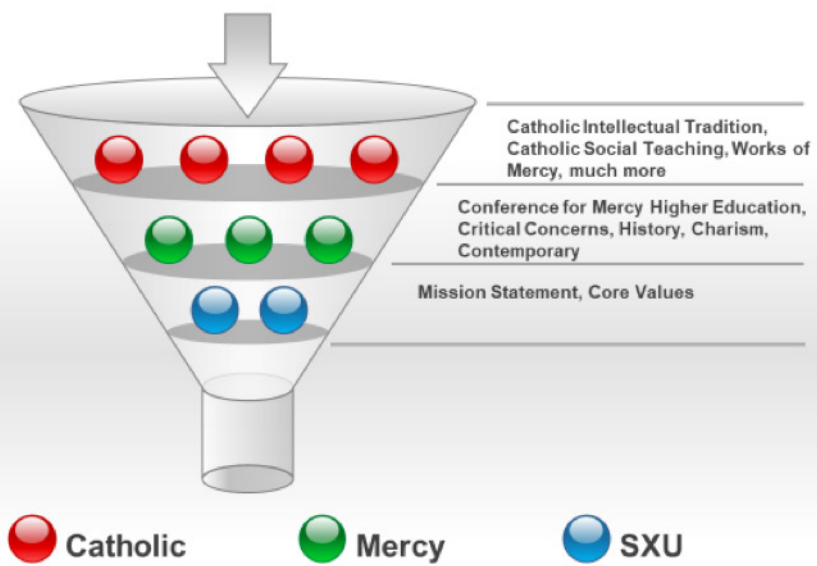


TABLE OF CONTENTS

I Catholic Intellectual Tradition (CIT)	3
Commitment to Universal Truth	
Faith and Reason	
Integral Relationship to the Catholic Church	
Hospitality and Tradition	
Sacramental Vision	
Power of Beauty	
Appreciation of Creation	
Dignity of the Human Person	
Innovation for the Common Good	
II Catholic Social Teaching (CST)	6
Life and Dignity of the Human Person	
Call to Family, Community, and Participation	
Rights and Responsibilities (to life and things required for human decency)	
Option for the Poor and Vulnerable	
The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers	
Solidarity (we are one human family)	
Care for God's Creation	
III Works of Mercy	9
<i>Corporal Works of Mercy</i>	
To feed the hungry	
To give water to the thirsty	
To clothe the naked	
To shelter the homeless	
To visit the sick	
To visit the imprisoned, or ransom the captive	
To bury the dead	
<i>Spiritual Works of Mercy</i>	
To instruct the ignorant	
To counsel the doubtful	
To admonish the sinner	
To bear wrongs patiently	
To forgive offenses willingly	
To comfort the afflicted	
To pray for the living and the dead	
IV Critical Concerns (CC)	12
Earth	
Immigration	
Nonviolence	
Racism	
Women	
V Core Values (CV)	16
Respect	
Excellence	
Compassion	
Service	
Hospitality	
Integrity	
Diversity	
Learning for Life	
VI Mission Statement	17
Educates persons	
To search for truth	
To think critically	
To communicate effectively	
To serve wisely and compassionately	
In support of human dignity and the common good	



CATHOLIC INTELLECTUAL TRADITION

The Catholic intellectual tradition (CIT) is a way to answer the significant questions of life using wisdom accumulated over the ages. It is a habit of engaging the world in the pursuit and sharing of knowledge. It aspires to a deep understanding that leads to shared wisdom relevant to all humanity. The CIT is a method of intellectual inquiry that draws upon a body of classical sources, follows a habit of inquiry bringing faith and reason into dialogue, and affirms the insights that have come from the centuries of inquiry and study. As such, the CIT is integral to the work of Catholic universities.

As CIT is a method of intellectual inquiry, it is relevant to those of any or no faith tradition. It is a way of engaging scholarship, a way of teaching, and a way of modeling intellectual pursuits.

The purpose of integrating the CIT at Catholic colleges and universities is to offer students and faculty alike a holistic lens through which to view the world and all scholarship. The intended hope of such integration is that graduates will leave with an understanding of the richness of the CIT and the value of such a robust understanding of the world, across all aspects of life and scholarship.

The ultimate end of intellectual activity in the Catholic tradition goes beyond the mere grasping of individual facts, to find deeper principles and meanings, including truths about the nature and purpose of human life.

1. Commitment to Universal Truth

Catholicism honors the processes of intellectual inquiry that aspire to grasp glimpses of the truth in the pursuit of integrated understanding. The ultimate end of intellectual activity in the Catholic tradition goes beyond the learning of facts, to find deeper principles and meanings, including truths about the nature and purpose of human life. On Catholic campuses, faculty, staff, and students are called to engage in philosophical, historical, scientific, social, and linguistic study, as well as the study of the professions, to enlarge understanding, enrich their own lives, and serve humanity.

2. Faith and Reason

The CIT presupposes that what is knowable by human reason and by God's revelation are not only compatible, but also mutually informing. Therefore, the Catholic tradition contemplates and seeks to understand these truths through a mutually illuminating dialogue of faith and reason. God is the source and the goal of both the truths of faith and the truths of reason. Because of their unity of origin and final end, reason and faith are not in contradiction. Rather, any apparent contradictions are an invitation to pursue fuller understanding.

3. Integral Relationship to the Catholic Church

Catholicism honors the intellect and appreciates the importance of knowledge in all areas. The CIT grows out of this appreciation of knowledge, for the purpose of helping people to serve well in the world. The Catholic tradition of higher education offers an invitation to students, scholars, and staff to think seriously about religious and spiritual matters in their own lives, in that of the campus community, and across humanity. This invitation encourages deeper spiritual awareness, an understanding of religious tradition, and a more profound sense of conscience to guide one's life and work.



4. Hospitality and Tradition

On Catholic campuses, hospitality is evident in terms of intellectual openness as well as a welcoming attitude and action toward all, including those with whom we may disagree. The Catholic university engages all cultures, ideas and people in a spirit of respectful dialogue in the pursuit of deeper understanding. Recognizing our foundation in the love of God and neighbor, the CIT calls us to openness and warmth in scholarship, service, and all academic pursuits. Hospitality implies a true commitment to academic freedom, including a fair chance to be heard and an opportunity for dialogue. The call to hospitality requires that people model civility in conversations, commitments and priorities.

5. Sacramental Vision

A sacramental vision sees the whole universe as the good gift of God and stirs one to know and understand the gift of this world. Catholicism recognizes the world itself as a sacrament that is a sacred sign of God's love. The CIT provides us with a habit of mind, a Catholic imagination, to see all that exists as an opportunity for wonder, fascination, insight and an invitation to know something we cannot see. A sacramental vision affirms the real or potential goodness of all that is around. Catholic colleges and universities offer tangible ways, through scholarship, advising, service, community life, and worship to experience the love of God through life and learning.

6. Power of Beauty

The awareness of beauty is one of the most profound qualities of a Catholic humanism. The CIT is an artistic tradition; the Church's sacramental vision of God and the cosmos aims to foster artistic creation and appreciation. Therefore, the university is charged with the promotion and analysis of the arts and sciences as manifestations of beauty.

7. Appreciation of Creation

Study of the physical world, from the cosmos to the molecular level, is a means to grow closer to God through understanding the universe God created. Humanity has been entrusted as caretakers of creation, and scientific knowledge provides the understanding necessary to support responsible stewardship. Like all scientists, scholars at Catholic institutions use the scientific method to understand the mysteries of the natural world in all its beauty and complexity. The Catholic tradition also calls upon scholars to engage in studies ethically and to provide insights to care for the world in which humanity lives.

8. Dignity of the Human Person

The CIT exemplifies an ethical tradition that affirms the intrinsic value of each human being as created in the image of God. The person's sacred worth obligates us to promote conditions consistent with human dignity and reject those conditions that threaten intrinsic human value.

9. Innovation for the Common Good

The pursuit of the common good and the improvement of the conditions of life arise from the dignity of the person. Scholars at Catholic colleges and universities are invited to find and understand new ways to meet human needs and solve the problems of society. This search fosters understanding and innovation that promotes human flourishing in community.

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CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

Catholic social teaching is a central and essential element of the Catholic faith. It is rooted in the biblical prophets who announced God's special love for the poor and called God's people to a covenant of love and justice. Our commitment to the Catholic social mission must be grounded in and strengthened by our relationship with God who shapes our hearts to be able to love one another.

<http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/catholic-social-teaching/sharing-catholic-social-teaching-challenges-and-directions.cfm>

1. Life and Dignity of the Human Person

The Catholic Church proclaims that human life is sacred and that the dignity of the human person is the foundation of a moral vision for society. Our belief in the sanctity of human life and the inherent dignity of the human person is the foundation of all the principles of our social teaching. We believe that every person is precious, that people are more important than things, and that the measure of every institution is whether it threatens or enhances the life and dignity of the human person.

2. Call to Family, Community and Participation

How we organize our society, in economics and politics, in law and policy, directly affects human dignity and the capacity of individuals to grow in community. The family is the central social institution that must be supported and strengthened. While our society often exalts individualism, the Catholic tradition teaches that human beings grow and achieve fulfillment in community. We believe people have a right and a duty to participate in society, seeking together the common good and well-being of all, especially the poor and vulnerable. Our Church teaches that the role of government and other institutions is to protect human life, human dignity, and promote the common good.

3. Rights and Responsibilities (to life and things required for human decency)

The Catholic tradition teaches that human dignity can be protected and a healthy community can be achieved only if human rights are protected and responsibilities are met. Therefore, every person has a fundamental right to life and a right to those things required for human decency. Corresponding to these rights are duties and responsibilities, to one another, to our families, and to the larger society. While public debate in our nation is often divided between those who focus on personal responsibility and those who focus on social responsibilities, our tradition insists that both are necessary.

4. Option for the Poor and Vulnerable

Catholic teaching proclaims that a basic moral test of society is how our most vulnerable members are faring, calling us to put the needs of the poor and vulnerable first.

5. The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers

Catholics believe that the economy must serve people, not the other way around. Work is more than a way to make a living; it is a form of continuing participation in God's creation. If the dignity of work is to be protected, then the basic rights of workers must be respected, the right to productive work, to decent and fair wages, the right and responsibility to participate in decisions affecting one's well-being, to private property, and to economic initiative. Respecting these rights promotes an economy that protects human life, defends human rights, and advances the well-being of all.



6. Solidarity (we are one human family)

Catholic social teaching proclaims that we are one another's keepers, wherever they live. We are one human family. Learning to practice the virtue of solidarity means learning that "loving our neighbor" has global dimensions in an interdependent world.

7. Care for God's Creation

The Catholic tradition insists that we show our respect for the Creator by our stewardship of creation. Care for the earth is a requirement of our faith. We are called to protect people and the planet, living our faith in relationship with all of God's creation. This environmental challenge has fundamental moral and ethical dimensions that cannot be ignored.

As the dignity of human life is the foundation of Catholic social teaching, this central Catholic principle requires that we measure every policy, every institution, and every action by whether it protects human life and enhances human dignity, especially for the poor and vulnerable.



WORKS OF MERCY

"We ought then to have great confidence in God in the discharge of all these offices of Mercy, spiritual and corporal, which constitute the business of our lives..." Catherine McAuley

<https://fwdioc.org/works-of-mercy.pdf>

Works of Mercy in Catherine McAuley's time and in the ministries of contemporary Sisters of Mercy

<https://www.mercyworld.org/about/works-of-mercy/>

Corporal works of mercy

1. To feed the hungry.
2. To give water to the thirsty.
3. To clothe the naked.
4. To shelter the homeless.
5. To visit the sick.
6. To visit the imprisoned, or ransom the captive.
7. To bury the dead.

Seven spiritual works of mercy

1. To instruct the ignorant.
2. To counsel the doubtful.
3. To admonish the sinner.
4. To bear wrongs patiently.
5. To forgive offenses willingly.
6. To comfort the afflicted.
7. To pray for the living and the dead.

[illegible]

	Catholic Intellectual Tradition	Catholic Social Teaching	Corporal Works of Mercy	Critical Concerns	SXU Core Values	SXU Mission
Spiritual Works of Mercy						
To instruct the ignorant	X	X			X	X
To counsel the doubtful	X	X			X	X
To admonish the sinner	X				X	X
To bear wrongs patiently					X	X
To forgive offenses willingly					X	X
To comfort the afflicted		X		X	X	X
To pray for the living and the dead					X	X

CRITICAL CONCERNS

Sisters of Mercy, Institute Chapter, 2011

"We are scandalized by the increase in the impoverishment of peoples, the pervasive denial of basic human rights, the degradation of Earth and increased violence and racism in all their forms. We mourn the continued oppression of women in Church and society, unjust immigration laws and the lack of solidarity among peoples and nations."

Sisters of Mercy
CRITICAL CONCERNS



Earth

We believe in the need for sustainability of life, supporting both a lifestyle and legislation that acknowledge everyone's right to water and the need to address climate change.

Sisters of Mercy
CRITICAL CONCERNS



Immigration

Believing firmly in the dignity of every person, we work for just and humane immigration laws in the U.S., address policies that push people to flee their countries, and examine the global impact of immigration.

Sisters of Mercy
CRITICAL CONCERNS



Nonviolence

We work for peace through prayer, education, personal and communal practices of nonviolence, and legislative advocacy to reduce armed conflicts, gun violence and human rights abuses.

Sisters of Mercy
CRITICAL CONCERNS



Racism

We believe racism is an evil affecting us all. We work to recognize and dismantle institutional racism in order to become an anti-racist multicultural community.

Sisters of Mercy
CRITICAL CONCERNS



Women

Through our schools, colleges, health-care institutions and spirituality centers, and through our legislative advocacy, we give special attention to women's education, health and spirituality.

<https://www.sistersofmercy.org/files/documents/resources/Justice/CriticalConcerns-Poster-FINAL.pdf>

[illegible]



CORE VALUES

Eight core values, articulated in 2003-2004 but always at the heart of Saint Xavier University's mission, ground and enliven the institution's academic and co-curricular programs and its operating ethos. These values ground and enliven the University's Catholic identity, Mercy heritage and commitment to knowledge for both personal enhancement and social progress.

<https://www.sxu.edu/about/values.asp>

1. Respect

Respect moves us to understand the gifts and unique contributions of every person in the University community and to value diverse perspectives.

Catholics and immigrants, girls and young women, women whose education had been interrupted by family responsibilities, those who were the first in their families to attend college -- in different eras, these groups lacked opportunity to acquire an education. Respect for personal dignity and individual potential has consistently prompted Saint Xavier to welcome these students and help them succeed.

2. Excellence

Excellence commits us to challenge ourselves to utilize our God-given gifts -- intellectual, social, physical, spiritual and ethical.

Saint Xavier's commitment to excellence impels both individuals and the University itself to consistently strive for outcomes that are exemplary rather than simply satisfactory. Such striving for excellence touches all aspects of University life from academic programs to sports, from student services to campus environment, from recruitment to publications, from special occasions to daily business. This value also inspires the University community to recognize its members' significant achievements and contributions to the welfare of others.

3. Compassion

Compassion compels us to stand with and embrace others in their suffering that, together, we may experience God's liberating and healing presence.

This value reflects the reality that Mercy demands commitment, courage and action, as well as sensitivity, understanding and care. Members of the Saint Xavier community stand with their colleagues in times of personal crisis or grief and express compassion through multiple endeavors that respond to the needs of others within and beyond the University.

4. Service

Service calls us to use our gifts, talents and abilities to advance the genuine well-being of our community and those we encounter.

Service to students is a basic tenet of life at Saint Xavier University, as is service by students, staff and faculty -- each lending personal skills and professional expertise to assist others through campus clinics, off-campus internships, service trips and numerous volunteer opportunities that extend the ethos and the value of service well beyond Saint Xavier's campus.



5. Hospitality

Hospitality draws us to do our daily work with a spirit of graciousness that welcomes new ideas and people of all backgrounds and beliefs.

At Saint Xavier, the value of hospitality means making space for an unexpected visitor, a surprising idea, a fresh insight, even a disturbing question or challenging opportunity. Welcoming the ideas of another may not result in agreement, but such hospitality does require attentive listening and a readiness to reconsider one's position.

6. Integrity

Integrity gives us the ability to realize the greater good in our actions and programs and challenges us to look at our work and ourselves holistically and as one united with others across the globe.

Integrity, whether personal or institutional, implies coherence between words and acts. It calls each member of the Saint Xavier community to live in accord with what the University professes to be as an educational institution with a Catholic and Mercy character. Integrity suggests both a certain wholeness in the University itself and connections between the University and the larger educational, religious and social worlds in which it functions.

7. Diversity

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.

Saint Xavier's founding sisters recognized the importance of access to education, in particular for those who were excluded from opportunities to receive a college education at the time. Today, in this same spirit, Saint Xavier University actively participates in the continuous creation of opportunities for underserved populations. Saint Xavier University values and intentionally engages with diversity to foster an environment that affirms and celebrates all of the identities held by members of our community.

8. Learning for Life

Learning for life, in the liberal arts tradition, encourages us to pursue knowledge and truth throughout our lives in ways that improve our communities and ourselves and that strengthen our understanding of each other.

Saint Xavier's commitment to the liberal arts and sciences, as well as to a variety of professional programs, is a commitment to education as a means of liberating people to live meaningful lives as well as earn a decent living. In accord with the value of learning for life, the University enrolls students of all ages and supports programs and activities that expand the knowledge of members of the broader community, whatever their age or formal education.



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.

<https://www.sxu.edu/about/mission.asp>

Saint Xavier University

As an institution of higher education, Saint Xavier engages its students, its faculty and staff, and those who comprise its immediate and broader communities in the primary activities of teaching, learning, scholarship and service. The University is named after the Jesuit Saint Francis Xavier, the patron saint of Mother Frances Xavier Warde who, in 1846, brought the Sisters of Mercy from Pittsburgh to Chicago and founded Saint Francis Xavier Female Academy of Chicago, Illinois, the forerunner of Saint Xavier University.

A Catholic institution

Saint Xavier University reflects and extends the teaching mission of Jesus. It is a ministry of the Roman Catholic Church, a relationship made possible because of its continuing sponsorship by the Sisters of Mercy through the Conference for Mercy Higher Education. Catholic teaching, especially the dialogue between faith and reason and the social justice tradition of the Church, undergirds the University's mission and values.

Inspired by the heritage of the Sisters of Mercy,

Grounded in the Gospel stories of a compassionate and hospitable Jesus who loved and served others, the ministry of the Sisters of Mercy to the poor, sick and uneducated began in Dublin and now extends around the world. Their reputation as educators prompted the city's first Catholic bishop to bring the Sisters of Mercy to Chicago, where they founded Saint Xavier in 1846, making it the first Mercy institution of higher education existing in the world today. Imbued with the spirit of the Sisters of Mercy, Saint Xavier University extends a rich tradition of intellectual rigor, compassionate service and hospitality to its students and to the world through the work of higher education.

Educates persons

The University develops and sustains programs and practices that lead people away from ignorance toward the expression of their fullest human potential. Among the expressions of full human potential are displays of personal and professional excellence, ethical decision-making and concern for the welfare of others.

To search for truth,

As an educational ministry of the Church informed by its Mercy heritage and sponsorship, Saint Xavier University encourages and supports all members of its academic community in their search for truth, including religious and theological truths that derive from or point to the existence of a loving God in whose image each person has been created. The journey toward truth is lifelong -- Via, Veritas, Vita (John. 14:6) -- a quest that respects faith, reason and the diverse approaches of various disciplines and methods of observation, reasoning and analysis.

To think critically,

When Saint Xavier became a college in 1915, the sisters designing the course of studies grounded the academic program in the liberal arts and sciences in order to "liberate" or "free" students to live reflectively as they acquired knowledge and searched for truth in their personal and professional lives. Becoming liberated, in this sense, requires



the ability to think critically. Thus, Saint Xavier's curriculum, past and present, emphasizes careful observation and inquiry, reflection and contemplation, assessment, creativity, argumentation and integration. By learning to think critically, in all its dimensions, students can be freed from laboring under unfounded assumptions, preconceived notions and stereotypical judgments; they are freed to live informed, productive, good lives.

To communicate effectively

Saint Xavier University is a community of discourse in which the knowledge and critical thinking of individuals and groups can be both challenged and expanded. Effective communication within a community of discourse requires different skills and approaches, grounded in academic disciplines and characterized by civility and respect for the opinions, experiences and beliefs of others. As an educational community, Saint Xavier also has a responsibility to share its search for truth and its critical thinking with a broader public who are both critics and consumers.

To serve wisely and compassionately

Service is a fundamental message of the Gospel and a hallmark of the life and ministry of Jesus. Thus, as a Catholic institution sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy, Saint Xavier University educates persons not only for themselves but also for others. To serve wisely involves making good ethical judgments about the disposition of one's and the world's resources, including personal time and talents. To serve compassionately is to extend oneself in merciful action on behalf of others in their need. Service in the spirit of Mercy derives from an awareness of the needs of others and a feeling of solidarity with them, informed by intellectual principles found in religious, ethical, and moral teachings and traditions.

In support of human dignity and the common good

A fundamental message of the scriptures and a basic principle of Catholic social teaching is that human beings have innate dignity because they are made in the image and likeness of God. This personal dignity cannot be mitigated by conditions of race, class, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age or physical ability. The common good, a complementary principle of Catholic social teaching, is predicated on the tenet that each person holds a God-given responsibility to promote a just and merciful world that make the benefits of God's goodness accessible to all. Saint Xavier University strives to be intentional about addressing human dignity and the common good in its programs, activities and relationships.

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