




# **Update**

# **2025-2028**

Saint Mary's University Accessibility Plan

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April 1, 2025

## **Land Acknowledgement**

We acknowledge that Saint Mary's University is in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq People. We are all treaty people, with roles and obligations that include responsible stewardship of the land, a commitment to relationships with Indigenous peoples based on trust and respect and to partnering with them for our mutual wellbeing.

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## President's Message

I am pleased to present the 2025-2028 Update to the Saint Mary's University Accessibility Plan. With this Update, we build on past successes while embracing a more adaptive and collaborative approach to accessibility. We are moving to a living document format which will allow us to align with our latest Strategic Plan and the Provincial Standards as they are released.

The Update continues to draw upon key components of our institutional Vision, reinforcing our longstanding commitment to accessibility and community engagement. We remain dedicated to equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility, ensuring these principles are woven into the fabric of our university through intentional decisions and continuous improvement.

Our approach is evolving, but our key themes remain steadfast. Rather than outlining broad actions for the entire university, we are shifting to a more tailored approach. Accessibility leaders, guided by those with lived experience, will collaborate with departments and units to identify and implement actions that align with their specific work. This model strengthens accountability and further embeds accessibility across our institution.

We will continue to monitor our efforts to remove and prevent barriers as outlined in the original Plan.

I am confident we will all continue to work proactively to integrate accessibility at all stages of decision-making, ensuring meaningful access for all members of the Saint Mary's University community.

- President Robert Summerby-Murray

## Aligning our plans

Our Saint Mary's Accessibility Plan Update (2025-2028) aims to ensure everyone on campus knows they have a role in our commitment to accessibility. It aims to guide us in how we can contribute to ensure accessibility is achieved and our community gains the rewards that diversity and belonging bring.

To achieve these goals, our Accessibility Plan is aligned with [our Saint Mary's Strategic Plan \(2024-2029\)](#). The aim of our is to provide a framework for inclusive excellence across all our faculties, departments and programs.

The plan names our Mission, Vision, and Values for our academic community as:

Category	Description
Vision	<p>Saint Mary's building on our strong tradition of scholarly excellence, accessibility and community engagement, will be the university of choice for aspiring citizens of the world. We will achieve this by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Creating a space for possibility through inspiration, innovation, inclusion, investment and action.</li><li>• Nurturing a culture of care and community.</li></ul>
Mission Statement	<p>Saint Mary's University pursues excellence in research, teaching and learning, while fostering an inclusive and</p>

	diverse community dedicated to local and global engagement, collaboration and service.
Values	<p>Our university values guide our daily commitment to our distinctive contribution to society, locally and globally. These values are expressed through everything we do, as we pursue:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intellectual transformation,</li> <li>• Individual and collective resilience,</li> <li>• Intercultural engagement,</li> <li>• Alumni and community connection, and</li> <li>• Ethical wisdom</li> </ul>

In the new strategic plan, the University is committed to five priority areas, one of which is Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility. But the note on the bottom of the priorities is what holds a special message for our entire Saint Mary's community. The line reads...

"We are a people-first institution that integrates EDIA into all we do, including all aspects of our teaching, research, operations and services. There is still much work to be done, which is why we include EDIA as one of our five priorities."

The alignment of the Saint Mary's Accessibility and Action Plans ensures EDIA is a priority in what we hold important and in all we do.

## Successes

Over the last three years we have made meaningful progress. We hope that these accomplishments will lead to even more learning and removal of barriers.

These changes include, but are not limited to:

- The University Senate created a standing Accessibility Committee, with a representation of at least 50% of whom are people with disabilities.
- Through a survey and focus groups, we have sought the guidance and expertise of people with disabilities, people who are Deaf and hard of hearing, and neurodiverse people.
- New full-time roles within the University include Accessibility Lead and Return to Work and Accommodation Advisor.
- The Patrick Power Library and the Studio for Teaching and Learning have created accessibility working groups.
- The Studio for Teaching and Learning and Accessibility Lead have hosted training opportunities for the campus community. In addition, several external opportunities have also been shared.
- Work has started on the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission (MPHEC) Online Conceptual Framework to include accessibility lens.

- The Patrick Power Library has been working to improve accessibility across all services.
- Research has begun on what accommodations need to be in place for graduate students. The researchers are students who identified as having one or more disabilities.
- We have begun reviewing the procurement process to embed accessibility considerations.
- We have started reviewing external accessible customer service training.
- A new student accommodation policy was approved by Senate and the Board of Governors in 2024.
- The Fred Smithers Centre for Student Accessibility has started using Accommodate software to simplify accommodation requests.
- Active transportation plan has been developed and shared with Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM).
- Audit of built environment conducted, and final report received in 2022. The Facilities Management team consults the report when approaching new projects.
- In collaboration with various stakeholder groups, the development of the Campus Map App covering accessible elements of the campus is in progress and launched in 2025.



- A text-based resource which highlights accessible features of academic buildings on the campus was drafted in 2024.
- Two employees have completed the Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification within the last year.
- New Saint Mary's University Strategic Plan speaks to including Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility in everything we do.
- Enterprise Information Technology (EIT) have adopted the approach that new EIT projects must hold details about accessibility.
- EIT added a Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) compliance field to its project intake form, as a first step to amending the intake process.

## **The next three years**

Over the next three years, we will continue our journey towards meaningful access and belonging within the Santamarian community. Our goals from our last plan will continue to be refined as we continue our journey.

## Goals

### **Awareness and capacity building**

As outlined in our strategic plan our goal is to create and foster an equitable, diverse, inclusive, and accessible community. A community which provides meaningful access, is welcoming, inclusive, and supports everyone as they learn and succeed.

We can achieve this through consultation with people with lived experience and working together to:

- Identify, address and prevent physical, systemic, and attitudinal barriers across all areas of campus life.
- Embed accessibility and inclusion values to foster a culture of belonging.
- Support the university community as we increase our collective knowledge and build-up resources to embed accessibility into all aspects of operations.

### **Teaching, learning and research**

As our strategic plan identifies we must critically examine the interactions, processes and colonial systems that all too often have characterized our teaching and research. To achieve our goal of inclusive and equity-oriented teaching and research we will:

- Review current policies and ensure new policies have integrated accessibility lens.
- Develop and foster more inclusive and accessible teaching, learning, and research environments.
- Offer professional development opportunities and accessible supports for teaching, learning, and research. These should include accessible pedagogical principles, as well as tools such as technologies that can simplify the processes for all stakeholders.

## **Goods and services**

To create an inclusive and equity-oriented Saint Mary's University, we will:

- Work towards all goods and services sourced, obtained, implemented and delivered by Saint Mary's University are built to provide meaningful access.

## **Employment**

As an institution committed to meaningful access, we will:

- Establish guidelines to ensure barrier-free employment opportunities for people with disabilities, people who are Deaf or hard of hearing, and neurodiverse people.
- Eliminate barriers in hiring practices, including accessible job postings, inclusive interviews, and accommodations during onboarding.

## **Transportation**

Saint Mary's University aims to enhance the accessibility of transportation services. Key consideration will need to include parking, drop-off areas and as smooth as possible transitions to public transportation.

## **Built environment**

Saint Mary's University is committed to ensuring that our buildings, shared spaces, and campus grounds are accessible, inclusive, and welcoming. We will:

- Work towards meaningful access, by adhering to the Nova Scotia Building Code and the Accessibility Act's Built Environment Standards (when implemented) and drawing from CSA Standard B651-23 Accessible Design and the Rick Hansen Foundation program.
- Plan for the future by balancing diverse stakeholder requirements and ensuring accessibility considerations are incorporated in the discussion and design phases for renovations and new projects.
- Where immediate changes to the built environment are not feasible, work to identify innovative and practical solutions that mitigate barriers and enhance usability for everyone.
- Address accessibility through a whole journey approach that considers accessibility needs and safety requirements of diverse users.

## **Information and communication**

Ensure that all university information and communications keep pace with or exceeds the accessibility standards for our sector and the needs of the Saint Mary's community.

## **Actions Moving Forward**

We are converting our Accessibility Plan to a living document format because we believe being able to adapt to changes will be especially important for the next three years. We know that the Province of Nova Scotia plans to announce the 6 standards over the next few years. We will need the flexibility to adapt to both the Provincial standards and to our available resources.

Rather than only having required actions, we are proposing that, over the next 3 years, each department/unit will name at least one action and determine how they can support that goal over the next year and half. The Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC), the Accessibility Lead, and pillar leads will support each department through the process.

As part of the process, each department/unit will:

- Set up a meeting with the Accessibility Lead to discuss:
  - Provincial recommendations, Accessibility Acts, First Person experiences navigating barriers to our campus community.
  - Current environment

- Department/units goals
- Name their action based on collaboration with the support of the Accessibility Lead and the AAC, as appropriate, including:
  - Naming their milestones and identifying their indicators for evaluating.
  - Estimating how long they believe they will need to meet their milestones.
  - Naming what resources/information they need to support their goal.
  - Naming who will be responsible for updating progress for evaluation.

## **Evaluation**

The evaluation process will remain roughly unchanged from the previous plan, but the Institutional Data Analysis and Planning (IDAP) office will be supported by the Accessibility Lead.

# Appendices

## Saint Mary's University Accessibility Committees and Roles

### Accessibility Advisor Committee (AAC)

- People and Culture - Return to Work & Accommodations Consultant – **Graham MacKenzie (Co-chair)**
- Science Faculty representative – **Dr. Lucie Kocum (Co-chair)**
- Accessibility Lead - Jennifer Webb
- Arthur L. Irving Entrepreneurship Centre, Director – Michael Sanderson
- Arts Faculty representative – Vacant
- Community representative – Breanna Miles (Autism NS)
- Director of Diversity, Inclusion, and Wellness – Deborah Brothers-Scott
- Facilities Management representative – Navjot Singh
- Financial Services representative – Vacant
- Fred Smithers Centre - Manager – Kate McHugh
- Fred Smithers Centre representative – Bill Travis
- Library representative – Shannon Higgins
- People and Culture representative – Graham MacKenzie
- Senate Committee on Accessibility representative – Paul Dixon

- SMUSA representative – SMUSA VP Academic
- Sobey School of Business representative – Vacant
- Staff Interpreter – Ashley N. Campbell
- Student Self-Advocate – Isabelle Chernish
- Studio for Teaching and Learning representative – Vacant

### **Accessibility focused positions on campus**

- Accessibility Lead - Jennifer Webb
- Arthur Irving Centre for Entrepreneurship Centre
  - Access Ability Entrepreneurship Project Manager – Molly Morgan
- Fred Smithers' Centre for Student Accessibility
  - Manager - Kate McHugh
  - Accessibility Advisor – Becca Chaytor
  - Accessibility Advisor - Bill Travis
  - Accessibility Resource Assistant – Kim Penny
  - Exam Accommodations Administrator – Esther Tong Yi Zhen
  - Exam Accommodations Administrator - Vacant
- Interpreting Team
  - Ashley N. Campbell – Staff Interpreter



- Starla Predham – Staff Interpreter
- Patrick Power Library
  - Access Team Manager – Shannon Higgins
- People and Culture - Return to Work & Accommodations Consultant – Graham MacKenzie

## **Accessibility pillar leads**

### **Awareness and Capacity Building**

- Interpreting Team - Ashley N. Campbell
- People and Culture - Return to Work & Accommodations Consultant – Graham MacKenzie
- Student Affairs and Services
  - Fred Smithers Centre, Manager – Kate McHugh
  - Fred Smithers Centre, Accessibility Advisor – Becca Chaytor
  - Mental Health Educator – Emma Dubois

### **Teaching, Learning and Research**

- AVP Research & Dean of Faculty of Graduate Studies & Research – Dr. Adam Sarty
- Director, Educational Development & Technology, Educational Development & Technologies, Online Learning – Stefani Woods

- University Librarian – Suzanne van den Hoogen

### **Delivery of Goods and Services**

- AVP Student Affairs and Services – Tom Brophy

### **Employment**

- AVP People and Culture – Mark Moffett
- Director of Diversity, Inclusion, and Wellness – Deborah Brothers - Scott
- People and Culture, Manager, Human Resources Operations - Katarina Hakansson

### **Transportation**

- Senior Director Facilities Management – Dennis Gillis
- Facilities Management, Manager – Projects and Facilities Planning – Navjot Singh

### **Built Environment**

- Senior Director Facilities Management – Dennis Gillis
- Facilities Management, Manager – Projects and Facilities Planning – Navjot Singh

### **Information and Communication**

- External Affairs
  - AVP External Affairs – Margaret Murphy
  - Manager of Digital Experience - Alex Becket

- Technology & Cloud Infrastructure Operations – Anthony Fear

### **Senate Accessibility Committee (2024-2025 membership)**

- Dr Christa Brosseau, Elected member of Senate (Cochair)
- Dr Paul Dixon (MGSC/Bus) (Cochair)
- Dr. Rachel Zellars (SJCS/Arts)
- TBA, (Science)
- Dr. Margaret MacDonald (/FGSR)
- TBA Accessibility Committee Rep
- TBA Learning and Teaching Representative
- Ms. Jennifer Tupper, one representative from the Studio for Teaching and Learning
- Ms. Alison Manley, representative from Library
- Mr. Bill Travis, representative from the Fred Smithers Centre
- Ms. Francesca Southwell (Student rep appt'd by SA to Apr/25)
- Ms. Charis Gervase (Student rep appt'd by SA to Apr/25)
- Ms. Shannon Morrison, Secretary of Senate (Sect.)



**Saint Mary's University**

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