



ST. JEROME'S
UNIVERSITY
Federated with the University of Waterloo

Student Affairs Strategic Plan 2026-2030

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St. Jerome's University and its Mission

St. Jerome's was founded in 1865 by the Congregation of the Resurrection and became federated with the University of Waterloo in 1960. As a public Roman Catholic university, St. Jerome's is committed to learning and academic excellence; the gospel values of love, truth, and justice; the formation of leaders for the service of the community and the Church.

The Student Affairs team plays a vital role in realizing St. Jerome's University's aspiration to be Canada's premier Catholic undergraduate university, as mentioned in the institutional strategic plan. Through the priorities and aims set out in this strategic plan, the team supports the holistic development of students and strengthens the distinctive character of the University.



Territorial Acknowledgement

St. Jerome's University and the University of Waterloo acknowledge that much of our work takes place on the traditional territory of the Neutral, Anishinaabeg, and Haudenosaunee peoples. Our campus is situated on the Haldimand Tract, the land recognized in the Haldimand Proclamation of 1784 as belonging to the Six Nations, extending ten kilometres on each side of the Grand River.

We recognize that Indigenous Peoples have cared for, stewarded, and maintained relationships with these lands for countless generations, and that they continue to hold profound cultural, spiritual, and historical significance. We acknowledge the enduring impacts of colonization, including the intergenerational harms caused by the residential school system, the disruption of Indigenous languages, cultures, and ways of knowing, and the ongoing inequities experienced by First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities.

As a public Roman Catholic university, St. Jerome's is guided by the Gospel values of love, truth, and justice, calling us to uphold the dignity of every person and pursue the common good. These values shape reconciliation as an ongoing commitment grounded in honesty, accountability, and meaningful action.

Our commitment is informed by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action, which call upon churches and faith communities, and educational institutions to acknowledge historical harms, support healing and reconciliation, respect Indigenous spiritual traditions, and work collaboratively toward justice. We recognize that reconciliation requires humility, accountability, and sustained institutional action.

The University's Indigenous Advisory Circle provides guidance on St. Jerome's mission-inspired commitment to reconciliation with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples, ensuring that institutional priorities are informed by Indigenous perspectives and grounded in meaningful relationships.

Through this Student Affairs Strategic Plan, we commit to fostering a campus community where Indigenous students are supported, respected, and able to thrive, and where all students and staff are encouraged to deepen their understanding of Indigenous histories, perspectives, and ways of knowing.

Message from the Director

Chairing the Student Affairs Strategic Plan committee has been a highlight over the last 6 months. The plan is intended to provide focus and direction to the Student Affairs team as we build our relationship with the Jesuits of Canada as a Jesuit-affiliated institution, and to ensure our work is relevant at a Catholic, liberal arts university.

The St. Jerome's University experience extends beyond the walls of the classroom, and the Student Affairs team is deeply connected to and passionate about supporting students throughout their time at St. Jerome's. Student Affairs is foundational in bringing St. Jerome's Mission, Vision, Values, and institutional strategic plan to life for students. The team works tirelessly to provide learning opportunities and co-curricular experiences where students gain self-understanding, build community, explore purpose, recognize the humanity of others, reflect and make meaning.

Throughout the planning process, committee members consulted with the St. Jerome's community (staff, faculty, and students) through surveys and focus group discussions, completed an environmental scan of strategic plans from other Catholic institutions and Student Affairs departments, and met and collaborated with the Student Affairs team to ensure alignment with their work. Thank you to the committee members Veronica Austen, Armaan Dattani, Andrew Deman, Sean Hayes, Gen Iozzo, Alyssa Stainforth, and Erika Toffelmire.

The Student Affairs' Strategic Plan communicates our shared vision for the future of the St. Jerome's student experience and reflects our unwavering commitment to ensuring that every student is seen, known, and valued, and consequently can thrive in all facets of their lives. This Strategic Plan will guide decisions and hold the Student Affairs team accountable for the duration of the plan (2026-2030). When considering new initiatives, resources, programs, and practices, the Student Affairs team will return to this document. The Student Affairs team will report to the committee every term about progress made towards the priorities and aims, and the committee will meet annually to receive updates and provide guidance on the report. The Student Affairs Strategic Plan is more than a roadmap; it is a call to action, and it invites each of us to co-create the St. Jerome's community and experience throughout our time here.

Mel Chaffe Director,
Student Affairs
Chair, Student Affairs Strategic Plan Committee



Message from Senior Leaders

At St. Jerome's University, we believe that higher education is about more than the acquisition of knowledge and professional skills. It is also about the formation of the whole person: intellectually, socially, spiritually, and ethically. The Student Affairs Strategic Plan affirms this commitment by recognizing that learning occurs not only in classrooms, but also through the relationships, experiences, challenges, and opportunities that shape students throughout their university journey.

Rooted in our Catholic and Ignatian traditions, this plan reflects a vision of student development that emphasizes human dignity, community, service, discernment, and care for the whole person. Through its priorities and initiatives, it seeks to foster a campus environment in which every student can find belonging, cultivate resilience, discover purpose, and develop the confidence to contribute meaningfully to society.

As we look to the future, I am confident that this plan will strengthen our ability to accompany students in their personal and educational journeys, helping them not only to succeed academically, but also to discern who they are called to become and how they are called to serve the common good.

Peter Meehan, PhD, President and Vice Chancellor, St. Jerome's University



The work that student affairs professionals do is subject to the very challenges that face the students we serve. As the complexity of the needs our students arrive at university with increases and anxieties about the future of the world continue to multiply, the weight of the work increases. The risk of burnout among student affairs staff is a real concern. Mission drifts when there is only attention to the what and when of work but not the why but where do the extra hours to think big come from? The work itself—helping people to know themselves, to appreciate and connect with others, and to discern a life's purpose—has perhaps never been more needed. In this context, a strategic plan should not just be an outward statement to the world about what an organization values or promises to do but an internal beacon guiding how people spend their time and stating with clarity why the work matters. The plan outlined here does an exceptional job in this regard.

The launch of a strategic plan is a moment of celebration—the culmination of many rounds of conversation with different stakeholders attempting to arrive at a place of collaboration if not consensus. There is much to celebrate here! The creation of this document also marks the beginning of new phases of implementation and assessment. I have every confidence that the Student Affairs Team at St. Jerome's will thrive as they begin these next steps in the work and that current and future St. Jerome's students will benefit from the renewed commitments and focus this document represents.

Carol Ann MacGregor, PhD, Vice President Academic and Dean, St. Jerome's University



Priority 1: Cultivate the whole-person formation (cura personalis) of St. Jerome's students.



“The director ought to... be concerned with [the student’s] entire being and their future.”

- Fr. Louis Funcken, founder of St. Jerome’s University

Aim #1: Integrate the 9 Dimensions of Wellness [1] throughout Student Affairs programs, services, and practices.

Aim #2: Support students through challenges, transitions, and growth moments throughout their university experience

Aim #3: Create opportunities for St. Jerome’s students to form supportive relationships with St. Jerome’s staff and faculty.

[1] Originally developed by Dr. Bill Hettler in 1976 (<https://www.wellnessalliance.org/resources-and-tools/six-dimensions-of-wellness>), and adapted by University of Waterloo, Faculty of Engineering in 2018 (<https://uwaterloo.ca/engineering-wellness-program/the-nine-dimensions-wellbeing>).

Priority 2: Foster an inclusive and vibrant student community.



“Las experiencias que tienes como estudiante son las que te van a formar por el resto de su vida.” (The experiences you have as a student are what will shape you for the rest of your life.)

- Isabel Uriarte Latorre, founder of Cafe Feminino and partner of SJU in Peru

Aim #1: Cultivate a robust student leadership program to support peer-led community-building opportunities.

Aim #2: Strengthen the unique benefits of the St. Jerome's coregistered student experience.

Aim #3: Facilitate welcoming and inclusive spaces, places, and environments that support students' well-being and sense of belonging.

Priority 3: Prepare students to be engaged citizens and compassionate leaders in service of the world.



“A Catholic university does more than impart knowledge. It forms women and men who seek truth, who recognize the dignity of every human person, and who understand that education is ultimately ordered toward service.”

- Bruce Rodrigues, Chancellor, St. Jerome's University

Aim 1: Integrate the Ignatian Pedagogical Paradigm [1] into Student Affairs programs, services, and practices.

Aim 2: Support the development of students' critical awareness of social systems and structures.

Aim 3: Provide opportunities for students to practice curiosity, empathy, and social responsibility through dialogue and engagement with people, perspectives, and experiences different from their own.

[1] Ignatian Pedagogy: A Practical Approach was developed by the International Center for Jesuit Education (Rome, 1993) .
https://sjweb.info/documents/education/pedagogy_en.pdf

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