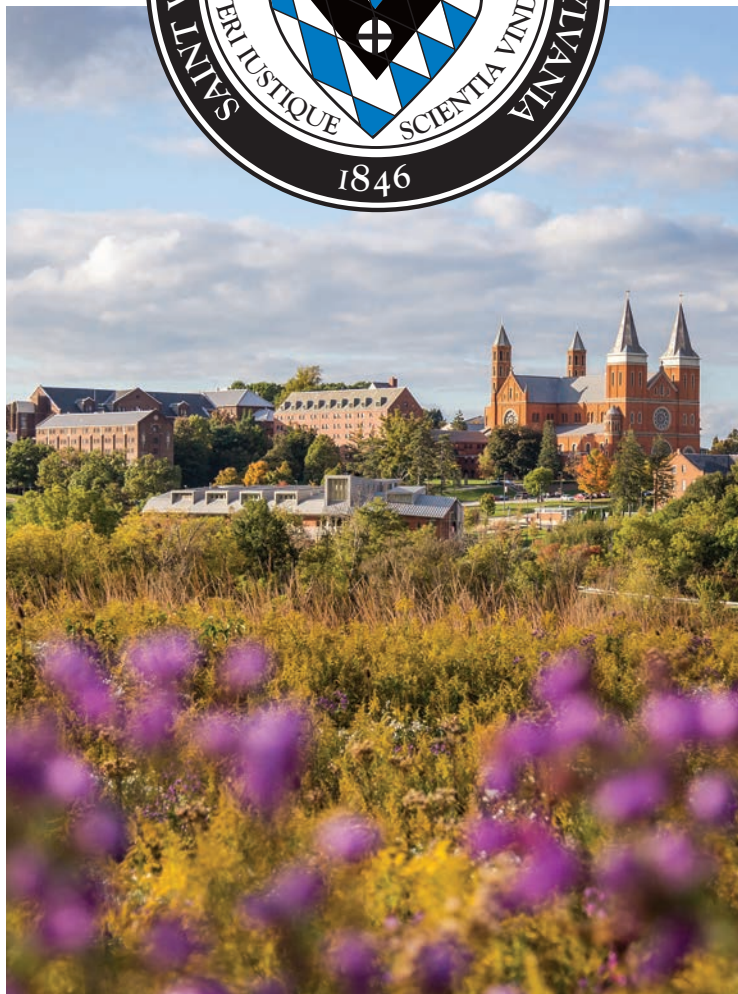


TOGETHER, WE MAKE A DIFFERENCE.



STRATEGIC PLAN 2021-26



INTRODUCTORY NOTE

Saint Vincent College is firmly committed to students and the community, as articulated in its mission statement:

Saint Vincent College is an educational community rooted in the tradition of the Catholic faith, the heritage of Benedictine monasticism and the love of values inherent in the liberal approach to life and learning. Its mission is to provide quality undergraduate and graduate education for men and women to enable them to integrate their professional aims with the broader purposes of human life. The programs, activities and encounters that make up student life at Saint Vincent College encourage the intellectual gifts, professional aptitudes and personal aspirations of students to mature harmoniously.



This Strategic Plan for Saint Vincent College sets forth the priorities and goals for 2021-2026. The careful curation and alignment of strategic priorities, actions, and corresponding indicators will guide the next five years of the College. This plan, however, is a living document that will grow and evolve with the College, its constituents, and stakeholders.

PROLOGUE

// Father Paul Taylor, O.S.B.
President, Saint Vincent College



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That commitment, though, is not to exist as a mere statement confined to the pages of College documents. It must be a force, manifest in the actions of our College community. The strong affirmation of faith in this statement is then strengthened by Scripture. From the Letter of Saint James, “. . . faith of itself, if it does not have works, is dead.”²

The Strategic Plan of Saint Vincent College: 2021-2026, sets out to declare the works of our mission and guideposts we will use to measure the success of those works. This introduction, therefore, gives direction and intentionality to the work we set out to do, using these documents as our foundation:

1. The Rule of Saint Benedict
2. “Letter in Augsburg Postzeitung”, November 1845, Boniface Wimmer
3. Ex Corde Ecclesiae, Pope Saint John Paul II
4. Laudato Si’, Pope Francis
5. Fratelli Tutti, Pope Francis
6. The Saint Vincent College Mission Statement

Recently, Saint Vincent College has received recognition and accolades for being a “Transformative” College³⁴. This transformation takes a student beyond the normal increase in capacity expected in college because of preparation, resources or test scores to a much higher plane of success in their completion of the undergraduate program. The mission of Saint Vincent College, however, points to an even more profound transformation each student is challenged to undertake to build the foundation of a life of true meaning.

When students arrive at Saint Vincent, they are coming from a variety of cultures, family environments and educational backgrounds, and all are welcome. What is common among these students, though, is that each has been subjected to any number of prevalent trends in society which have done them and other young people a serious disservice by weakening or eliminating their understanding of the value of human life and its sanctity. Society has legislated that vulnerable unborn life can be terminated at will when it is seen as inconvenient. The lives of vulnerable adults are at risk when elderly or the incarcerated are seen as unproductive or a drain on society. Bigotry, against whomever it is directed, is fundamentally an effort to portray groups of people having lesser or no worth. Exploitation of people, in human trafficking and other vile practices, objectifies human beings, disregarding their life value and their status as children of God. Therefore, the transformation at the heart of the Saint Vincent experience begins with an articulation and demonstration that the

**“All guests
who present
themselves
are to be
welcomed
as Christ.”**

— Saint Benedict

life of each student has value, and indeed, is sacred. Pope Francis states this clearly in his encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*.

Some parts of our human family, it appears, can be readily sacrificed for the sake of others considered worthy of a carefree existence. Ultimately, “persons are no longer seen as a paramount value to be cared for and respected, especially when they are poor and disabled, ‘not yet useful’ – like the unborn, or ‘no longer needed’ – like the elderly.”⁵

In addition, a readiness to discard others finds expression in vicious attitudes that we thought long past, such as racism, which retreats underground only to keep reemerging.⁶

Saint Benedict affirms this in his Rule, “All guests who present themselves are to be welcomed as Christ.”⁷

Embracing the sanctity of human life is reflected in many ways at Saint Vincent College but finds particular voice in one legacy we gratefully adopted and one we have had for over 175 years. The College has been honored to be entrusted with the legacy of Fred M. Rogers. His very ethos acknowledges and proclaims the value inherent in every person, particularly children, when he says,

The best environment for learning is a loving home. When children know they are loved and valued, they are more likely to want to learn, especially if they know education is important to the grownups in their family.⁸

Saint Vincent College will “Love them, feed them, want them around.”⁹

The legacy of Fred Rogers compliments the path laid out by Boniface Wimmer who, in his November, 1845 article in the *Augsburger Postzeitung*, (a document now considered the “Charter of Our Order” for Benedictines in the United States), expressed the way in which the Benedictines uniquely bring that sense of the value and dignity of life to those whom we serve. In the article, he writes of the plight of immigrants from Germany to the United States, articulates the good work done by other groups, but then describes the ways in which Benedictines provide a better solution. At the heart of this answer is the Benedictine charism of Stability along with the lived tradition of 1,400 years (now well over 1,500 years) of Adaptability. He writes:

That the Benedictine Order by its Rule is so constituted that it can readily adapt itself to all times and circumstances. The contemplative and practical are harmoniously blended: agriculture, manual labor, literature, missionary work, education were drawn into the circle of activity which Saint Benedict placed before his disciples. Hence, they soon felt at home in all parts of Europe and the same could be done in America.¹⁰

The destitute and unfortunate have no one to offer them a hospitable roof; the orphans naturally become the victims of vice and irreligion – in a word, the conditions in America today are like those of Europe 1,000 years ago, when the Benedictine Order attained its fullest development and effectiveness by its wonderful adaptability and stability. Of course the Benedictine Order would be required to adapt itself again to circumstances and begin anew.¹¹

As Saint Vincent College makes sustainability a priority in this Strategic Plan, we can use “stability combined with adaptability” as an apt definition of sustainability.

In his encyclical *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis urges the People of God to care for the earth, our home. Sustainability not only is applied to the financial health of Saint Vincent College, but also our buildings and grounds which provide for us the environment for the mission of education. Many advances have been made in “green technology” and LEED Certification standards, along with the science of renewables that enable us to improve our surroundings while caring for the earth and one another. In October 2008, Saint Vincent College held the grand opening of the Fred Rogers Center, the first LEED Certified (Gold) building on campus. The success of that building and the joy that it brings has enlivened the priority for green initiatives in each future building project which are all infused with significant green components.

Within the last year, Saint Vincent College commissioned a study for facilities assessment and planning. It is clear from this study that our campus has significant deferred maintenance, much of which is in the area of infrastructure. Many factors have led us to this difficult issue, including: Capital improvements which have received a low priority when budgets are tight, funding for new buildings which is more readily available than for infrastructure repair, and a lack of awareness of older facility needs.

Two realities, (1) a need for infrastructure repair/upgrade and (2) a preference for enhancing environmental sustainability through dedicated green initiatives, give Saint Vincent an opportunity to prioritize infrastructure repair within a culture of sustainability.

Critical to the harmonious blending of the contemplative and the practical is the physical stability of the monastic community. That stability is a perpetual statement to those in our community that our belief in the value of their lives is always ready to be put into action. The monks are always at the monastery. The physical presence provides the substance and quality of education and support for the students in the school. The monks commit to being there and being available to provide a significantly different experience.

With the deliberate investment of personnel and resources, the priority of the endeavor is the education and betterment of the students. Wimmer’s plan put the burden of the cost on the monastery:

In a short time, a large German population would be found near the monastery, such as in the Middle Ages, villages, towns, and cities sprang up near Benedictine Abbeys. Then the monks could expect a large number of children for their school, and in the course of time, as the number of priests increases, a college with a good Latin course could be opened. They would not be dependent upon the tuition fee of the students for their support, which they could draw from the farm and the missions (though these would not be a source of much income in the beginning). Thus, they could devote their energies to the education of the poorer classes . . . who could pay little or nothing.¹²



Wimmer put priority on education as a means of strengthening faith and integrating immigrants into the mainstream of American society. His plan was that the education Benedictines would provide would not be the exclusive province of the affluent but would raise up an entire community cutting across all economic strata.

Saint Vincent College was an all-male institution until 1983. Today all are welcome. In the present time there are similarly disadvantaged young people: immigrants, poor, homeless, and those who have poverty in education, that is, under resourced and poorly prepared for studies. The realities that face Saint Vincent College to recruit and retain qualified students who will succeed include the critical financial need of students and families, the willingness to pay, and the fierce competition of too many institutions for too few students. Saint Vincent College will develop greater financial aid resources that are less dependent upon the current budget.

Pope Francis, in *Fratelli Tutti*, emphasizes the global community of all people working and living together for the common good. He denounces an inward-looking self-centeredness and calls the People of God to go outside of their comfort zone to communicate and welcome those different from them. He references *The Rule* extensively acknowledging Saint Benedict's priority for hospitality. "All guests who present themselves are to be welcomed as Christ."¹³

Saint Vincent College will develop a greater geographic and ethnic diversity, with a national and international strategy and a strategic balance of men and women students.

Saint Vincent College must prioritize the resistance to the sense of inward-looking comfort. In this difficult past year of pandemic, the College was forced to engage in online education and succeeded. In that experience, though, we realized that the experience of in-person education on campus expressed the best of our pedagogy, and that the success of online education had that concrete connection to the on-campus community and experience. In a similar way, students open

new insights beyond their comfort zones when they study abroad, but still have the stability of the on-campus community while they are temporarily separated from it.

Saint Vincent College will develop online education and study abroad experiences that optimize those pedagogical instruments for students and faculty, with partnerships with Benedictine monasteries and others throughout the world.

The great service of education must be accessible to all who seek to follow the great path all true education sets forth. That path rejects the relativism and priority given for subjective, narcissistic judgements that do great harm to young minds and vastly disserve our society.

That path recognizes that Truth is objective. It exists



independently from a person's thought or awareness. Truth is uncovered and discovered in the process of learning and seeking. Truth resides in the creative power of God in ways beyond our understanding, and is attainable through Jesus Christ, who is "the Way, the Truth and the Life."¹⁴

The search for truth is precisely the purpose and mission of education. For Saint Vincent, which so deeply celebrates the sanctity of human life, searching for truth is pursuing the life of the mind, the noblest expression of the value we place on the lives of everyone in the community.

This search must take on a profound sense of asceticism to be fruitful.¹⁵ The sacrifice and discipline of choosing one path over another is the only way that a successful journey through life may be undertaken and completed. Saint Paul offers this advice in the letter to the Romans:

*Do not conform yourselves to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, so that you may judge what is God's will, what is good, pleasing and perfect.*¹⁶

The Saint Vincent College motto "Veri Iustique Scientia Vindex" or "Knowledge is the guardian of truth and justice," motivates this pursuit of the life of the mind to reach for truth. Justice, sometimes so rare a commodity in the modern age, is the fruit of the search for truth and the residual of the relentless journey for knowledge of the world of God's creation and the human beings God embraces as his children.

Embedded in a Benedictine monastic community and taking upon itself the Benedictine charism which is articulated in the ten "Hallmarks of a Benedictine Education," Saint Vincent College students and faculty can find in this rich 1500-year history many tools to accept and engage this ascetic life in pursuit of truth and justice.

It is precisely in this deliberate, disciplined, academic life in this Benedictine college that we seek truth to dispel our illusions – about the world, the Church, ourselves and even God.

The pursuit of the life of the mind, and the greater pursuit of life itself, are precisely the seeking of truth. That is the goal for all of us. It is the source of great joy in all of our endeavors. We embrace that goal for, as Albert Einstein said, "The pursuit of truth and beauty is a sphere of activity in which we are permitted to remain children all of our lives."

Regarding the pursuit of truth in higher education, Pope Saint John Paul II in his Apostolic Constitution *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, noted:

*[...] a specific part of a Catholic University's task is to promote dialogue between faith and reason, so that it can be seen more profoundly how faith and reason bear harmonious witness to the unity of all truth. While each academic discipline retains its own integrity and has its own methods, this dialogue demonstrates that methodical research within every branch of learning, when carried out in a truly scientific manner and in accord with moral norms, can never truly conflict with faith. For the things of the earth and the concerns of faith derive from the same God.*¹⁷

Pope Saint John Paul II again stressed the complementarity of science and religion when he wrote that:

*"Science can purify religion from error and superstition. Religion can purify science from idolatry and false absolutes. Each can draw the other into a wider world, a world in which both can flourish."*¹⁸

In his first discourse in the book, "The Idea of a University," Saint John Henry Newman, writes that

The heart
of the Saint
Vincent
experience
begins with
an articulation
and
demonstration
that the life of
each student
has value,
and indeed,
is sacred.

a University, to have integrity as a University, cannot omit the science of Theology or Religion, because it would be ignoring a part of the universe it is studying. The search for truth cannot exclude the quest our souls need to undertake:

with confidence that truth can be found; and that the best of the human spirit will be realized in the relentless search for truth.¹⁹

It is in the experience of the search for truth that our lives become more complete and less filled with fear. Pope Francis writes:

The solution is not relativism. Under the guise of tolerance, relativism ultimately leaves the interpretation of moral values to those in power, to be defined as they see fit. In the absence of objective truths or sound principles other than the satisfaction of our own desires and immediate needs, we should not think that political efforts or the force of law will be sufficient. When the culture itself is corrupt, and objective truth and universally valid principles are no longer upheld, then laws can only be seen as arbitrary impositions or obstacles to be avoided.²⁰

Fred Rogers wrote a letter to advocate for the foundational education and experience he provided, which also supports the critical ideals of Saint Vincent College's Core Curriculum.

A reporter once asked why we don't spend more time on our program teaching children the ABC's. My answer was that I would rather give children the more basic tools of learning--like knowing that their ideas are important, being able to expect and accept mistakes, and keeping at a task even when it's frustrating. If we help children develop those tools of education, they will want to learn such things as the ABC's--and more importantly, they will want to use the alphabet letters to build and not destroy.²¹

The process of growth for Saint Vincent College with this Strategic Plan, along with the growth of each of our students can be inspired by the words of Saint Peter:

In this you rejoice, although now for a little while you may have to suffer through various trials, so that the genuineness of your faith, more precious than gold that is perishable even though tested by fire, may prove to be for praise, glory, and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.²²

The Strategic Plan for Saint Vincent College 2021-2026 plots the course for our work for the next five years. The priorities here support achieving the measurable goals of this plan.

Rev. Paul R. Taylor, O.S.B., Ph.D., *President*
September 10, 2021

Endnotes

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- 2 Saint James, James 2:17, *New American Bible* (1970)
- 3 Leonhardt, David and Sahil Chinoy, "The College Dropout Crisis," *New York Times*, May 23 2019;
- 4 "Most Transformative Colleges," *Money Magazine*, August 25, 2020, placed Saint Vincent College as number 48 in the country.
- 5 Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, Encyclical, 18.
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- 7 Benedict of Nursia, *The Rule of Saint Benedict*, (1980) 53:1
- 8 Rogers, Fred M., Response to interview questions from Martha Slud of Special Report (date unknown)
- 9 Irene S. Taylor
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- 13 Benedict of Nursia, *The Rule of Saint Benedict*, (1980) 53:1
- 14 Saint John, John 14:6, *New American Bible* (1970)
- 15 Hitz, Zena; *Lost In Thought*, 2020, pp 85 ff.
- 16 Saint Paul, Romans 12:2, *New American Bible* (1970)
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- 18 Pope Saint John Paul II, *Philosophy and Theology*, 1988, op cit. M13.
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- 20 Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, 206.
- 21 Rogers, Fred M. letter in *Learning About Words Creative Teaching Press*, June 29, 1998
- 22 *New American Bible*, 1970, 1 Peter 1:6-7.

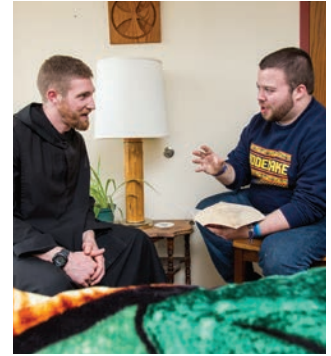




1

MISSION INTEGRATION

Saint Vincent College is committed to integrating its Catholic, Benedictine, and liberal arts mission across the entire college community to all men and women, undergraduate and graduate students, faculty, and staff. Gospel values of love of Christ and neighbor, as interpreted through the Rule of Saint Benedict, guide the College as it remains faithful to the Benedictine tradition, the Catholic faith, and innovative approaches to classical liberal arts and sciences.



STRATEGIC PRIORITY #1

To extend hospitality, membership, belonging, and connectedness across the Saint Vincent College community.

Action Item

Foster an organizational culture built upon the strength of the unique Catholic, Benedictine, and liberal arts mission of Saint Vincent College.

Action Item

Inspire engagement of all women across the College (faculty, staff, student, alumni, friends).

Action Item

Integrate and align the work of campus centers with the mission of Saint Vincent College.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY #2

To incorporate the presence of Benedictines and other religious throughout the College to enhance the community and promote the implementation of the mission.

Action Item

Integrate Benedictines and other religious throughout the College to promote the College’s mission.

Action Item

Identify opportunities for the Bishop, Archabbot, and Benedictines to connect with students, faculty, and staff.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY #3

To advance the Saint Vincent College motto of “Veri Iustique Scientia Vindex,” or “knowledge is the guardian of truth and justice,” related to the mission of Saint Vincent College across the faculty, staff, and student experience.

Action Item

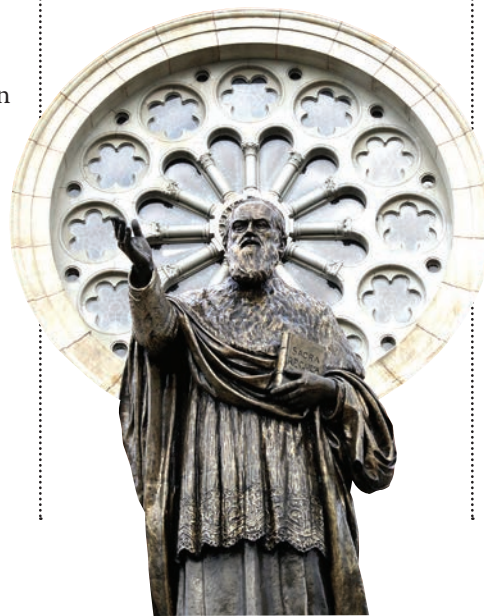
Invest in professional development opportunities related to learning, experience, service and worship for administrators, faculty, and students.

Action Item

Engage the Center for Catholic Thought and Culture to lead the College in the academic pursuit of Catholic faith and Catholic Intellectual Tradition.

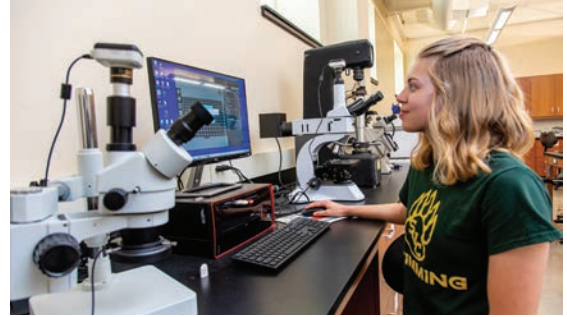
Action Item

Transition the Strategic Planning Committee into an extended Institutional Effectiveness Committee to ensure completion of the Strategic Plan.



ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

Saint Vincent College is committed to the rigorous search for truth. This pursuit of truth serves our community, contributing to all members' pursuits of their vocation in harmony with the common good.



STRATEGIC PRIORITY #1

To integrate major degree programs and the Listening, Learning, and Loving Core Curriculum to seek truth, knowledge, a fulfilling career, and a meaningful life.

Action Item

Fully implement and assess the Listening, Learning, and Loving Core Curriculum.

Action Item

Review all academic programs for sustainability and viability.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY #2

To promote new programs and teaching methods that develop critical student reading and writing skills and encourage collaboration between students and faculty.

Action Item

Propose new programs that support the mission, enhance recruitment, offer more opportunities for student success upon graduation, and strengthen national liberal arts prominence.

Action Item

Develop and promote the "Graduate School at Saint Vincent College," while identifying strategic new opportunities and programs of study.

Action Item

Establish the "Round Table of Scholars" with Endowed Faculty Chairs to promote collaboration across these positions and the whole College.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY #3

To establish study abroad and distance education experiences in partnership with Benedictine monasteries and other institutions of higher education throughout the world.



Action Item

Partner with Benedictine monasteries in the United States and abroad to engage students and faculty in the understanding of the Benedictine monastic charism.

Action Item

Create opportunities for students to study with other institutions of higher education around the world.



PILLAR 3

STUDENT SUCCESS

Saint Vincent College is committed to the holistic development of all students. We seek to provide students with the knowledge and tools to be leaders and serve others in their vocations, in their communities, and in their faith through curricular and co-curricular programs and opportunities.



STRATEGIC PRIORITY #1

To promote a respect for every person as a child of God and sacred, across and beyond the Saint Vincent College community.

Action Item

Provide opportunities for diverse, inclusive, and equitable conversation and experiences for students to positively impact experience and retention.

Action Item

Support the mental, physical, and spiritual health and well-being of all students.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY #2

To encourage hospitality and belonging across the Saint Vincent College community, as expressed by Boniface Wimmer, “to all who knock, welcome.”

Action Item

Promote student participation in experiential learning, leadership, and service opportunities.

Action Item

Build a welcoming environment for a geographically and ethnically diverse student body with a balance of men and women students.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY #3

To support a transformative student experience for all undergraduate and graduate students.

Action Item

Support student learning, persistence, retention, and completion.

Action Item

Increase student attendance in graduate and professional school.



4

INSTITUTIONAL SUSTAINABILITY

Saint Vincent College is committed to both short-term and long-term viability. Policies and practices that are economically, environmentally, and socially just are key to the sustainability of the College.



STRATEGIC PRIORITY #1

To build financial stability ensuring the College resources are available to current and future generations of students.

Action Item

Implement and engage in a new Comprehensive Campaign.

Action Item

Grow and stabilize student enrollment through recruitment and retention.

Action Item

Increase financial support for the advancement of athletics.

Action Item

Align staffing and compensation prioritized by enrollment and mission needs across all units.

Action Item

Strengthen national or international impact, with particular focus on gaining greater market visibility.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY #2

To reduce dependence on unfunded financial aid by increasing funded financial aid resources.

Action Item

Increase funded financial aid resources through fundraising.

Action Item

Use financial aid resources to attract students and stabilize discount rate.

Action Item

Adjust percentage of unfunded financial aid relative to funded financial aid.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY #3

To strengthen the environmental sustainability and vitality of the physical plant infrastructure of Saint Vincent College.

Action Item

Develop a campus master plan for facilities and infrastructure.

Action Item

Identify environmental sustainability priorities for campus.





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