



St. Mary's College

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 2004 - St. Mary's University College, Calgary, Alberta, is Canada's newest academic degree granting institution.

The Catholic College has won the right to become a university college and grant its own Bachelor of Arts degrees, College President Dr. Terry Downey announced today, May 16, 2004. The first B.A. degrees will be awarded at a fall 2004 convocation. St. Mary's is the first and only liberal arts Catholic college in the history of western Canada to grant its own B.A. degrees, and currently the only Catholic college west of the Maritimes to grant its own liberal arts B.A. degrees.

The Alberta Minister of Learning notified the College earlier this month that it has been designated as an institution that can grant baccalaureates, and also gave the College permission to be designated a university college. The formal change in name to St. Mary's University College is on June 16, 2004, after official notification is published in the Alberta Gazette.

The provincial government has empowered St. Mary's to offer three degrees: a three-year B.A. degree with a Concentration in General Studies, a three-year B.A. degree with a Concentration in English, and a four-year B.A. degree with a Major in English. Each of the new degree programs requires a demanding range of courses in both liberal arts and the natural sciences as well as mandatory courses in ethics and theology. The College will apply to add additional academic degrees in the months and years to come.

Over the past seven years, St. Mary's has built a very successful university transfer program in which students complete up to two years of study at the College before finishing degree programs at other postsecondary institutions. The transfer program will continue in conjunction with the independent degree programs.

Enrolment in September is anticipated to be at least 550 students, a dramatic increase in enrolment from only 25 students when the College first opened its doors to the first full-time students in 1997, and a 500% increase over the past four years. St. Mary's continues to expand its liberal arts and science offerings and now offers university-level instruction in 27 academic disciplines including

those in the humanities, social sciences, mathematics, natural sciences, human kinetics, and theology.

The College also offers post-degree professional courses for teachers in Alberta's Catholic schools, and the College's recently completed Strategic Plan identifies as a priority the development of a Bachelor of Education degree program within the next five years to prepare teachers for positions in Catholic school systems throughout western Canada. This initiative, already in the early planning stages, is in response to very strong demand from Catholic school boards throughout Alberta and well beyond for a Catholic Faculty of Education.

At the moment, St. Mary's does not receive any government grants. All current operating and capital budgets are met from donations and tuition fees, which are competitive with those of publicly, funded institutions.

A Board of Governors that includes the Most Reverend Frederick Henry, Bishop of the Diocese of Calgary, who is also Chancellor of the College, governs St. Mary's.

"While we are a Catholic college firmly grounded in a centuries-old tradition of Catholic higher education, we warmly welcome students of all faith traditions and cultural backgrounds," Dr. Downey said. "Our small class sizes and insistence on teaching excellence are reflections of our commitment to help individual students reach their full potential as intellectual, social and spiritual beings."

St. Mary's encourages student involvement in social justice endeavours and community volunteer activities as an extension of academic work, Dr. Downey stated. The academic curriculum of the college is also enhanced by an athletics program which saw six different teams bring home Championship banners in the 2003-2004 season, only the second season that the College had teams in contention in Alberta College leagues.

Regarding the College's vision for the future, Dr. Downey notes, "St. Mary's University College aspires to be a beacon of learning, civility and hope, inspiring students to meet the future with confidence, intellectual acuity, moral conviction and a passion for social justice and the common good."

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