

The St. Jerome's University Academic Plan, 2015-2020

Closing Report

September 2022

The Academic Planning Process

In June 2015, the St. Jerome's University approved the [SJU Academic Plan, 2015-2020](#), the first academic plan in the history of the University. It was the result of a year-long, collaborative process, led by a Senate Council-elected Academic Planning Committee (see Appendix A for committee membership), that involved students, faculty, staff, alumni, select members of the University of Waterloo, and key external stakeholders. The plan identified five priorities related to: (1) academic programming, (2) student experience, (3) research and creative activity, (4) external partnerships, and (5) academic governance. Each of these priorities was accompanied by a series of more specific commitments.

In Fall 2015, five working groups corresponding to each priority began to work with the Vice President Academic and Dean (VPAD), the Associate Dean, and a faculty member serving in the role of Special Advisor to the VPAD for Academic Planning to establish implementation plans and identify early success indicators (see Appendix A for working group membership). Faculty members on the working groups were elected by members of Senate Council. A few of the working groups conducted town halls and other public consultations to gather feedback from the academic community.

Since June 2015, our academic plan has meant to serve as a statement of how we at SJU understand ourselves as an academic community with a 155-year history, as an affirmation of the importance of the humanities and social sciences (the liberal arts) for society, and as a set of priorities that has guided the development of academic activities.

This final summative report summarizes SJU's progress. It highlights some of our accomplishments and provides a foundation for a new round of academic planning, which began in Spring 2022. This report would not have been possible without the assistance and institutional memory of Dr. Scott Kline, Dr. Cristina Vanin, Dr. Veronica Austen, and Ms. Sue Brubacher. Additional comments provided by members of Academic Committee and Senate Council substantially improved a first draft of this document.

Priority #1: Academic Programming

To distinguish St. Jerome's University as a leading liberal arts university that promotes critical thinking, fosters social engagement, and inspires reflection and action in the pursuit of a more just and peaceable world

1.1 Explore opportunities for the creation of an SJU first-year seminar and capstone course

First-Year Seminar

Considerations of an SJU first-year seminar became part of SJU's response to the University of Waterloo's Arts First initiative. Conceived of as a way to ensure that Arts students at UW had foundational communication and research skills, Arts First at SJU had the potential benefit of providing a cohort experience for first-year students. In the pilot phase of Arts First, in 2017-2018, SJU offered one course (ARTS 140). Since 2018 and with the full launch of Arts First, SJU has offered multiple sections of ARTS 130 and ARTS 140 in the Fall and Winter terms. At the outset of Arts First, SJU committed to offer sections with enrolment caps of 25 to meet the demand of SJU's first-year co-registered students. The process of course selection in Arts at UW, which allows students to choose from every section offered, presented a challenge to the SJU objective of providing a cohort experience to students who chose to co-register at SJU. From the beginning, SJU co-registered students told us that assigning them only to SJU-offered courses was too restrictive and that they wanted the option of exploring other themes in other sections. In response to student feedback, SJU student advisors have *encouraged* (not required) first-year SJU co-registered students to enrol in an SJU Arts First section for their first term.

Capstone Course

In the early years of the SJU academic plan, the University of Waterloo Faculty of Arts contemplated the possibility of offering capstone courses for all students in Arts as a way to provide a more intentional cohort experience for UW Arts students. However, the Faculty of Arts chose not to move ahead with capstone courses. This impacted SJU's planning for capstone courses.

1.2 Offer courses with enrolment caps that, to the greatest extent possible, promote personalized interaction between instructors and learners

Chairs of departments in "shared disciplines" have continued to work with their counterparts at the University of Waterloo to ensure that class sizes remain consistent with their traditional sizes. In some cases, class sizes have expanded to meet growing student demand; in other cases, class sizes have decreased due to declining majors-minors and waning demand.

Accomplishments

- Established new, smaller courses linked to practicum experiences for senior level students in SMF
- Offered additional sections of senior seminars in Legal Studies
- Collaborated with Faculty of Arts colleagues to ensure that Arts First courses remained capped at 25 students per course
- Offer a number of small cap courses to serve the communications requirements of the Faculty of Math

1.3 Enhance SJU's course-based experiential learning opportunities that foster leadership development, community engagement, and solidarity with local, national, and international social justice organizations and movements

Among new activity was the creation of Encounter-KW in February of 2016. In response to student feedback seeking to have greater engagement in the local community, Encounter-KW provides an alternative to Reading Week. As a group-facilitated, service-learning experience, Encounter-KW has focused on a variety of topics, including “food justice,” a topic that had come up repeatedly in an inter-departmental focus groups and a topic that has a number of advocates in Waterloo region. As a collaboration between Student Affairs and SJU faculty, Encounter-KW allows students to earn academic credit by taking a special topics course while at the same engaging with local partners on community development projects.

St. Jerome’s Department of Italian Studies has begun collaborating with the University of Guelph School of Languages and Literatures to provide students with an opportunity to participate in a study abroad program with the Sorrento Field School. St. Jerome’s also began exploring how we can offer students the opportunity to study in Italy with the course, ‘The Sacred Imagination.’

Prior to the pandemic, which began to affect SJU in Winter 2020, academic departments had been exploring opportunities enhance their experiential learning offerings. Sexuality, Marriage, and Family Studies, for example, renewed their curriculum to ensure that honours students would have an opportunity to participate in a two-term practicum at a community agency.

In Philosophy, four iterations of PHIL 319J, Ethics of End-of-Life Care, and two iterations of PHIL 321J, Philosophy of Palliative Care, have provided opportunities for students to connect with healthcare professionals who provide end-of-life care, and to enter concretely into the experience of these workers. Students in these courses have brought theory and practice together by helping lead advance care planning sessions and other community engagement events, and by exploring, with guidance from local hospice staff, what it means to accompany someone with a life-limiting illness.

The Department of English offers courses on site at the world renowned Stratford Festival in partnership with a consortium of other universities. **ENGL 364- Shakespeare in Performance at The Stratford Festival** is a historical, theoretical, and analytical introduction to Shakespeare's plays in performance, both on stage and screen, this course focuses on specific problems and decisive issues of past productions and of those in the current Stratford Festival season. **ENGL 367 Voice and Text at the Stratford Festival** is taught by faculty and Stratford Festival coaches, this practical course invites students to explore acting techniques and exercises to develop their stage voice with a particular focus on Shakespeare's plays.

Accomplishments

- Created the “Encounter KW” program, which enables students to earn academic credit during the Winter term as they work with local social justice organizations
- Partnered with University of Waterloo Housing to pilot a leadership course, “Foundations of Student Leadership,” aimed at student leaders (e.g., dons and student government), Winter 2019
- Created a course entitled “The Sacred Imagination,” which is designed to be held in Rome
- Hosted the SMF course exhibit on anti-oppressive practices curated by Carm DeSantis and students.
- Increased investment for the St. Jerome’s University Reading Series which brings practicing literary writers from across Canada to campus to share their work with students
- Continued to promote and support the Beyond Borders program, which is SJU’s international service-learning initiative
- Supported students involved in an environmental history program run through the DRAGEN Lab at St. Jerome’s University and held in Sussex, England

1.4 Build on SJU's interdisciplinary strengths through program renewal and development

Building on the strengths identified in academic planning and exploring with other Faculties at the University about partnering on potentially new academic programs that align with SJU's mission, the VPAD's Office undertook foundational research to identify needs and gaps in the various curricula in the Faculty of Arts and other Faculties at the University of Waterloo. Based on this foundational research, Working Group #1 held a faculty town hall in December 2016 to receive input from SJU faculty regarding potentially new programs.

In Summer 2018, the VPAD's Office began to explore the establishment of a program without any founding partnerships with Faculties at the University of Waterloo. To facilitate this process, St. Jerome's University hired a consultant, who is a senior faculty member in the Faculty of Arts at the University of Waterloo with a long history of starting up new programs in entrepreneurship and social benefit at Waterloo.

In Fall 2019, the Interim President authorized the VPAD to engage another consultant to conduct a needs assessment study that involved chairs, students, members of the University of Waterloo community, and then faculty. The idea was to restart conversations that were begun during the town halls. In the midst of that process, the COVID-19 pandemic began to set in and the work of the consultant was paused. A report was delivered to the VPAD in late 2020.

Accomplishments

- Partnered with University of Waterloo Housing to pilot a leadership course, "Foundations of Student Leadership," aimed at student leaders (e.g., dons and student government) (Winter 2019)
- Developed a proposed new diploma program in Health Humanities (2020 to present)

1.5 Support the creation of courses that use a variety of delivery modes, including online and blended e-learning, to help meet curricular objectives

In Fall 2017, the VPAD requested that an SJU Librarian, undertake a survey among SJU faculty regarding their interest in online and blended courses. The librarian submitted a report to the VPAD in November 2017. The survey indicated a mixed response. While a number of faculty were interested in online and blended learning, many were content to stay with the delivery mode they were using. The pandemic forced all faculty to explore online tools and resources when face-to-face instruction was not possible.

Accomplishments

- While emergency remote instruction is not the same as full online course development, the COVID-19 response did have the effect of increasing skills and expanding interest in online instruction.
- Supported Course Technology Support Assistants/Online Learning Assistants
- Continued to offer the following CEL courses

1.6 Create classroom spaces that accommodate diverse course deliveries, teaching styles, and learning styles

As part of the second phase of SJU Campus Renewal 2015, classrooms in SJ1 (the original SJU building on the SJU campus) underwent a thorough remodelling. Along with the two state-of-the art "smartrooms" on the second floor (and housed within the newly remodelled library), SJU's classrooms and seminar rooms have been adapted to accommodate a variety of learning styles and modes of course delivery. In particular, it is

worthy of note that the configuration of rooms with round tables allows for more group work. These rooms are especially useful for UCOI courses. The new Academic Building SJ2, which was part of phase one of SJU's renewal project, is home to classrooms of various sizes, including a 285-seat lecture hall, and outfitted with the necessary technology to accommodate most face-to-face course delivery modes.

Accomplishments

- Completed the new Academic Building (SJ2) in 2016
- Completed remodelling of the classrooms and seminar rooms in the original SJU building (SJ1)
- Created new seminar rooms in J.R. Finn and Sweeney Hall
- Increased demand for use of spaces by University of Waterloo partners

1.7 Build on SJU's tradition of excellence in teaching with the establishment of teaching fellows designed to enhance the quality and profile of teaching at SJU

This commitment aligned with the creation of faculty teaching fellows on the University of Waterloo campus. While we did not aggressively move forward with this commitment, the university's new strategic plan continues to put emphasis on excellence in teaching and learning. As a result, there will be opportunity to consider various needs related to teaching excellence, in the next round of academic planning.

Priority #2: Student Experience

To distinguish St. Jerome's University as a "go-to" place on the University of Waterloo campus for students seeking a vibrant academic community, highly personalized academic support services, and formative co-curricular opportunities

2.1 Raise SJU's profile among high school students within a 150 kilometre radius of SJU

St. Jerome's University continues to recruit and co-register students in the Faculty of Arts at the University of Waterloo. Over the years, SJU has faced several challenges in recruiting, including SJU not appearing in a prominent place on student application forms, the public's understanding (or lack thereof) of the relationship between SJU and the University of Waterloo, and gaining access to high schools for the purpose of recruiting solely for SJU students (e.g., SJU continues to be part of the broader University of Waterloo recruiting team in Fall visits). As a result of these challenges, it is a significant task to raise SJU's profile. A key element in raising SJU's profile is developing a comprehensive outreach strategy that will promote SJU's unique strengths as a supportive academic community that provides a unique and yet complementary experience on the University of Waterloo campus. Students do not make decisions in a vacuum. Parents and peers are among the most influential in deciding which post-secondary institution to attend.

Accomplishments

- Developed a new outreach and recruiting strategy, which was submitted to senior leadership in 2017, followed up with updated/revised versions in 2019 and 2020. COVID put a hold on plans coming out of this strategy as traditional recruiting changed and budgets tightened in the University. Key elements in the comprehensive plan should be considered in the new academic planning process as they address the long-term development of our student population and eventually the development of our alumni
- Restructured the role of Recruitment and Admissions Manager into Outreach and Recruitment Manager to oversee implementation of outreach plan in 2019-2020
- Collaborated with high schools on service-learning opportunities (e.g., Wellington CDSB accompanied SJU students to Guatemala in 2017)
- Targeted outreach to elementary school audiences to support leadership activities. In particular, SJU hosted the Grey Bruce leadership conference several times and arranged a variety of programming. With COVID and the school board reallocating resources, this program has been placed in a state of hiatus. Additional elementary school outreach was paused due to lack of internal resources and then later shifted focus to high school students. Outreach to grade 8 students, and potentially even younger, should be considered in the next round of academic planning as having an SJU presence in Catholic schools at an early age will help significantly raise SJU's profile
- Hosted annual professional development (PD) day opportunities for all high schools within the Diocese of Hamilton. Led by the Registrar's Office and Associate Dean, these PD days were successful but disrupted by COVID. These types of activities should be considered in the next round of academic planning

2.2 Establish and implement recruiting measures that foster diversity and reward leadership, service, and academic achievement

In 2017, the Vice President Academic and Dean approved a comprehensive outreach and recruiting strategy that prioritized the recruitment of a student population that is diverse, desirous of leadership opportunities, and actively engaged in the pursuit of academic achievement. That plan was subsequently updated in 2019 and 2020. The pandemic, personnel turnover in the recruitment office, and the reallocation of resources slowed down the pace of activity as considered in the original plans.

Accomplishments

- Created application-based scholarships in 2015-2016 that focused on academic achievement, leadership, and service
- Redeveloped recruiting materials to emphasize SJU's unique contribution to life on the Waterloo campus. The most recent redevelopment took place in Spring 2021
- Worked with the WCDSB to build and develop relationships. Despite the challenges associated with the pandemic, we continue to work with local high schools around the University Co-operative Education Program (UCEP) and other programs, as laid out in the Memorandum of Agreement between the Waterloo Catholic District School Board, the University of Waterloo, and SJU
- Established a new social media presence through the @SJUBelong handle on Instagram and TikTok
- Before 2020, renewed focus on UW recruiting events (e.g., Fall Open House, March Break Open House). The pandemic largely did away with those plans for 2020-2022. We can expect to renew this focus once Ontario moves to in-person events
- Representatives from SJU, led by Katherine Bergman, attended the Truth and Reconciliation meeting at the University of Alberta in 2016 and began actively pursuing partnerships.

2.3 Enhance the academic support services offered by the Office of Student Success

In 2017, the combined staff from Residences, the Office of Student Experience, the Registrar's Office, the Office of Student Success, and Campus Ministry embarked on a process that led to the establishment of a consolidated student services department called Student Affairs. In Fall 2018, St. Jerome's increased support for the mental wellness of our students by establishing a Wellness Coordinator position

Accomplishments

- Created a centralized hub in SH where students can more easily access in one hallway many academic support services and academic advising
- Developed an enhanced Peer Academic Leadership program
- Provided enhanced transition support and education for incoming co-registered students and their supporters; e.g., You@Waterloo Day, SJU New Student Welcome, and the recently launched Waterloo Ready initiative, a virtual platform that begins before a student is on campus and continues throughout their 1A term. This work is ongoing and should be considered further in the next round of academic planning
- Established a Wellness Coordinator position in Student Affairs

2.4 Redesign the library and enhance library services

In Fall 2019, St. Jerome's University completed a \$2.2 million renovation and expansion of the SJU Library. The newly renovated and expanded library includes a dedicated reading room, multiple collaboration work/study rooms, open multi-purpose spaces, and zones for study carrels. The new space includes improved accessibility via the internal lift. It also includes new, state-of-the art moveable shelving, which helps the library use floorspace effectively while, at the same time, enabling it to maintain its core collection of books, periodicals, and reference materials. Adjacent to the library is a series of offices and work rooms that have been constructed to support a humanities-social sciences research lab or multiple labs. This lab space is currently occupied by the DRAGEN Lab, which is home to a \$10 million multi-year research project, funded in large part by the Social Science and Humanities Council through a Partnership Grant and led by Dr. Steven Bednarski. The third floor of SJ1 is also home to the Well-Link lab which is led by Dr. Maureen Drysdale. The Well-Link Lab provides resources and conducts research on the mental health and well-being

of emerging adults (ages 18-29) and the psychological variables believed to play an important role for success in post-secondary/tertiary education and school-to-work transitions.

Accomplishments

- Expanded and redesigned the library as an interactive space that can be utilized by a variety of stakeholders for potential readings and events
- Supported the development of Arts First courses (ARTS 130/140) through a partnership with SJU Faculty Member, Steven Bednarski, who served on the UW Arts First Development Committee
- One academic staff member in the library co-taught a section of an Arts First course
- Expand the Librarian's presence in UW-Learn for SJU courses, so that students can interact directly with their Librarian
- Created two "smart classrooms" adjacent to library in 2016. These rooms have been integral to the teaching of English for Math courses and other courses that use multiple delivery models
- Extended library access to the University Catholic Community and SJU alums
- Created collaborative workspaces and research labs to support student and faculty research and knowledge creation

2.5 Establish and promote links among SJU's academic activities, residential programming, and co-curricular initiatives

St. Jerome's University offers meaningful, integrated supported opportunities for our students across our student service areas (e.g., residence life, academic advising, service learning, student recruiting, scholarships and bursaries, and mental wellness). In 2017 St. Jerome's embarked on a process that led to the consolidation of student services under the office of Student Affairs. With a new department headed up by the Director of Student Affairs, who reports to the Vice President Academic and Dean, St. Jerome's now has a structure in place that encourages collaboration across departments and the University, including increased collaboration with academic staff. This is particularly valuable in areas like Service Learning where there are elements of programs that are tied to specific courses but where there are also initiatives that are independent of earning academic credit.

Accomplishments

- Developed a structure with key student service areas to integrate service and support offerings in North side of Sweeney Hall
- Began the development of a "constellation" approach to service learning at SJU that provides various entrance points for students while at the same time providing with a clear, scaffolded pathway (from a few hours one day, to full-time for a few months)
- Re-opened Finn as a residence on the 2nd and 3rd floor in 2018 and redeveloped spaces in the basement and on the first floor for program development
- Included the Director of Students Affairs and Student Affairs personnel in academic governance structures such as Senate Council, Academic Committee, and the Experiential Advisory Committee, non-voting, to foster the sharing of information and to working collaboratively

Priority #3: Transformational Research

To distinguish St. Jerome's University as an academic community engaged in transformational research and creative activity

3.1 Increase public recognition of innovative scholarly and creative activity

While scholarship remains an activity essentially directed by the individual scholar or scholars, including not only the topic of research but also how it is disseminated, universities can play a meaningful role in supporting and promoting its faculty's research and creative activity. For example, annual University publications such as *Update* highlighted at least one faculty member's research project. Additionally, social media and occasional email blasts were used to bring attention to various research projects. Perhaps most notably, the University set aside funds in its academic operations budget to support SJU faculty seeking marquee research grants. These funds, which go beyond the amounts set aside for research as part of collective bargaining, can be crucial in determining the success of a SSHRC application, as they help to establish a core funding source at the researcher's home university. These funds also serve to demonstrate to the University of Waterloo Office of Research that St. Jerome's University highly values research and is committed to helping the University of Waterloo remain a globally recognized research university.

Accomplishments

- Through the Collective Agreement, offer significant seed funding in the form of Faculty Research Grants and course releases supporting nearly 40 research assistant positions in a typical year.
- Provided in-kind, and institutional funding for externally funded research projects in the form of space, course releases, and cash contributions.
- Continued to offer the annual SJU author event except for a pause during COVID-19
- In Fall 2020 formed a partnership with Words Worth Books in Waterloo to profile SJU authors (Fall 2020)
- Faculty have played leadership roles in hosting or organizing major national and international conferences that bring St. Jerome's University recognition

3.2 Promote local, national, and international research that is community-situated, collaborative, and action-oriented

The University supported the establishment of the Well-Link Lab, which provides resources and conducts research on the mental health and well-being of emerging adults (ages 18-29) and the psychological variables believed to play an important role for success in post-secondary / tertiary education and school-to-work transitions. The Lab collaborates with researchers and institutions in Australia, Germany, Scotland, Sweden, USA, and the University of Toronto. The Lab was part of the University of Waterloo's President's Advisory Committee for Student Mental Health and contributed to the final report and 36 recommendations.

In Fall 2020, the Sexuality, Marriage, and Family Studies Department welcomed Dr. Ashley Hoskin as an AMTD Waterloo Global Talent Postdoctoral Fellowship and an Ontario Women's Health Scholar. The Fellowship brings together world-class scholars from across the globe to help them to accelerate their scholarship and to support them in the global development of their research. Dr. Hoskin's research addresses topics of mass violence in Canada and the world, particularly gender-based violence. Dr. Hoskin is a co-founder of LGBTQ Psychology Canada, a non-profit organization supporting LGBTQ+ scholarship.

3.3 Enhance opportunities for undergraduates to participate in faculty-directed, peer reviewed research projects

Historically, undergraduate participation in research has been limited largely to the sciences, particularly by providing staff for research labs, and the social sciences, such as in the fields of psychology or sociology. While each researcher has the freedom to include an undergraduate researcher in their projects, adequate research funds for researchers in the humanities, as well as some of the social sciences, may not be available to support the undergraduate/graduate student researcher's inclusion. In recognition of this situation and understanding that students are increasingly seeking research opportunities as undergraduates, St. Jerome's made available funds to enable student researchers to serve on research teams led by SJU faculty. In many cases, these funds were part of SJU's contribution to externally funded research projects.

One significant investment in undergraduate research opportunities include SJU's commitment to support undergraduate participation in Dr. Maureen Drysdale's [Well-Link Lab](#), which undertakes research on the mental health and well-being of emerging adults (ages 18-29) and the psychological variables believed to play an important role for success in post-secondary educational school-to-work transitions. Another significant investment is SJU's multi-year commitment to provide annual international (mostly England) research travel support to five undergraduates involved in the [Environments of Change](#) research project, directed by Dr. Steven Bednarski (History and Medieval Studies) and funded, in part, by the Social Sciences and Humanities Council (SSHRC). In addition, Dr. David Williams was awarded an ERA grant (2015-2020), \$190,000, 99% of which went to student salaries.

Accomplishments

- Piloted SJU Travel Grant for Undergraduate Research (4 grants of \$300 for upper year students)
- Supported the creation of research labs that facilitate undergraduate research as part of their work

3.4 Create and enhance opportunities for graduate students and post-doctoral fellows to work with SJU faculty

St. Jerome's University only registers students in one graduate program—the Masters of Catholic Thought. Opportunities for St. Jerome's University faculty to undertake graduate supervision of University of Waterloo students depend on a variety of factors, including historical practices within respective departments at the University of Waterloo and at St. Jerome's. SJU Religious Studies faculty, for example, continue to play an integral role in the delivery of the joint PhD program between the University Waterloo and Wilfrid Laurier, which focuses on religious diversity in North America. In recent years, St. Jerome's University has hosted the Directorship of the Tri-U graduate history program and has provided course release support to Director Dr. Jane Nicholas and office space used for administrative support of the program. In the Department of English, an MOU provides for SJU teaching and supervision, the setting of field exams, and a voting seat on the dept Graduate Studies Committee.

SJU has been party to a number of post-doc funding applications. Between 2020-2022, Dr. Matthew Wiseman, an historian of Canada, science, and the Cold War, will be at SJU as a [Banting Fellow](#). Under the supervision of Dr. Jane Nicholas (History), Dr. Wiseman's research project examines the history of Canada's National Research Council and the advancement of women scientists in biology, physics, and chemistry in twentieth-century Canada. Dr. Rhea Ashley Hoskin is a post-doc fellow in Sexuality, Marriage, and Family Studies at SJU working under the supervision of Dr. Toni Serafini. Dr. Hoskin's work focuses on Critical Femininities, Femme Theory, and femmephobia; it examines perceptions of femininity and sources of prejudice rooted in the devaluation or regulation of femininity.

3.5 Explore opportunities to establish research networks, centres, or institutes

SJU continues to support the establishment of smaller-scale research networks that are led by SJU faculty. For instance, the SJU Department of English is co-hosting *The Raymond Carver Review (RCR)*: considered the most

important academic journal for established and emerging scholars committed to the work of American short story writer, poet, and essayist, Raymond Carver (1938-1988). Dr. Chad Wriglesworth (English) is an associate editor on the RCR and an assistant director for the International Raymond Carver Society. For more about the journal and the website being hosted by SJU visit [*The Raymond Carver Review*](#) and the [International Raymond Carver Society](#).

SJU has played an integral role in the establishment of two research labs on the University of Waterloo campus: The [Well-Link Lab](#) and the [DRAGEN Lab](#). Both are located at St. Jerome's University. Headed up Dr. Maureen Drysdale, The Well-Link Lab conducts research on the mental health and well-being of emerging adults (ages 18-29) and the psychological variables believed to play an important role for success in post-secondary educational school-to-work transitions. It is housed in the recently remodelled academic-administration building (SJ1). The DRAGEN (Digital Research Arts for Graphical and Environmental Networks) Lab is led by Dr. Steven Bednarski and home to a team of researchers who use emerging digital technologies to understand the historical relationship between humans, nature, and culture. The DRAGEN lab is housed on the second floor of the recently remodelled Academic Building, next to the new and expanded SJU Library.

Accomplishments

- Supported the creation of research labs (e.g., Well-Link Lab and the DRAGEN Lab)
- Supported the development of a research collaboration focusing on the work the American author Raymond Carver

Priority #4: External Partnerships

To strengthen and establish mutually beneficial relationships with local, national, and international partners

4.1 Develop partnerships with civic, not-for-profit, religious, and community organizations that enhance teaching, learning, and research

Service Learning maintains numerous relationships with our local, regional, and international partners to facilitate our experiential learning programming.

In 2017, St. Jerome's University hosted '*A Year with the Saint John's Bible*', the first completely handwritten and illuminated Bible since the invention of the printing press. The University had two volumes of the Heritage Edition on campus: full-size, limited, signed and numbered fine art editions. The Year was launched with an ecumenical prayer service that included colleagues from Renison University College, Conrad Grebel University College, and Waterloo Lutheran Seminary. A number of our public Lectures in Catholic Experience focused on the Saint John's Bible. We partnered with the Diocese of Hamilton to host an event at the Royal Botanical Gardens called, 'Bugs in the Bible.' Two of our SJU English professors, Drs. Chad Wriglesworth and Norm Klassen, designed a course called, 'The Sacramental Imagination,' which was inspired by this Bible. The CBC Radio program, *Tapestry*, prepared an entire program on the Bible that aired in June 2017 and featured Dr. Cristina Vanin. Faculty from the University of Waterloo, Waterloo Lutheran Seminary, Conrad Grebel University, and St. Jerome's University integrated the Saint John's Bible into their courses.

Accomplishments

- Hosted a "Year with the St. John's Bible," which included various public lectures and public engagement events
- Joined the Grand Philharmonic Choir, Conrad Grebel University, and the UW Critical Media Lab to present Handel's *Messiah*, with digital images from the St. John's Bible, at the Centre in the Square in Kitchener, Ontario
- The St. John's Bible was featured on CBC Radio's *Tapestry*, which included a lengthy interview with Dr. Cristina Vanin, SJU's Associate Dean and our lead on the St. John's Bible
- Continued to serve as one of the bodies in the Catholic Partnerships agreement with the Diocese of Hamilton
- Partnered with Catholic schools in the Diocese of Hamilton to offer the Information to Transformation program
- Held co-sponsored Absent Friends Film Festival, held at St. Jerome's, to promote awareness of issues relating to death and dying with Hospice of Waterloo
- Student Affairs has been successful in obtaining grant support for Indigenous students, students with disabilities, and students with financial needs. The Powering Change Grant, funded through Global Skills Opportunity, was secured through UWaterloo in collaboration with AFIW partners, including SJU

4.2 Enhance relationships with Catholic education partners

In 2012, St. Jerome's University signed the "Partners in Catholic Education in the Diocese of Hamilton," which brought SJU into a working partnership with the educational institutions in the Diocese of Hamilton. This unique partnership was the result of conversations that focused on how to create better planning and communication among the Catholic school boards and to highlight the role of Diocese's Catholic university, St. Jerome's, in carrying out the Church's commitment to education. The Partnership includes all English and French Catholic School Boards in the Diocese of Hamilton.

Accomplishments

- Hosted Professional Development Days for high school teachers, chaplains, consultants, administrators, and supervisory officers
 - 2016: First Nations and Canada: Seeking True Reconciliation;
 - 2017: Being Responsible and Courageous Citizens Where We Live;
 - 2018: Engaging Youth in a Virtual World
- Worked with school boards as they developed international service-learning opportunities for high school students
- Held St. Jerome's University Registrar's Office recruitment workshops with Catholic school boards
- Hosted workshops at St. Jerome's University in support of initiatives at the Catholic Education Partnership (e.g., 2015: Fr. Laurence Freeman on Christian Meditation)
- Formalized partnerships with Catholic Education organizations such as English Catholic Council of Ontario Directors of Education (ECCODE) and Ontario Catholic Supervisory Officers' Association (OCSOA)
- Gave Saint John's Bible presentations at elementary and high schools across the diocese; engagement with art, history, and religion departments; integration of the Saint John's Bible into curriculum
- The Waterloo Catholic District School Board's University Cooperative Education Program (UCEP) partnership with SJU is very successful (not being held during the pandemic). The library works closely with UCEP

4.3 Enhance SJU's profile in Waterloo Region as a hub for continuing education and dynamic public lectures

St. Jerome's University continues to host lectures and events that are accessible to the public. This has remained the case, for some lecture series, even in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic. For example, SJU's Lectures in Catholic Experience are now available online and on demand.

Accomplishments

- Continued to offer the SJU Lectures in Catholic Experience
- Co-sponsored the [Bridges Lecture Series](#) (with the UW Faculty of Arts and the Faculty of Science)
- Hosted the [St. Jerome's University Reading Series](#), led by the SJU English Department

4.4 Establish mechanisms that will enable SJU to be a source of continued support and academic opportunities for SJU alumni

Under the leadership of the newly established role of Director of Enrolment and Upper-Year Transitions in 2017-2018, SJU engaged in a social media campaign to reach out to SJU alumni through Facebook, LinkedIn, and other popular sites. The Director also worked with the VPAD's Office and IT to consider options for a useable student relations management tool (commonly known as a CRM). The Director also led an effort to form an SJU Alumni Council. The Council was in the process of creating annual signature events for alum engagement. Unfortunately, this project stalled as the Director went on leave. Upon the Director's return from leave in 2019-2020, she submitted a comprehensive upper-year transitions and alumni development plan, in collaboration with the Director of Advancement.

4.5 Explore new opportunities to work with and serve marginalized and under-represented communities

Rooted in SJU's mission and in Catholic social teaching, in April 2020, St. Jerome's University launched a three-phase equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) program. It is a program aligned with the fifth commitment in the "Our Culture" section of SJU's [Strategic Plan, Building on Tradition, 2016-2021](#). Additionally, this EDI program aligns with SJU's endorsement of the Universities Canada seven [Inclusive Excellence Principles](#), which took place in October 2017, and in conjunction with UC's [ongoing commitment to advance equity, diversity and inclusion](#). The first phase of SJU's EDI program has been completed. The second phase, the development of an action plan, is set to be completed in 2022. The third phase, the action plan implementation, should follow shortly after the action plan is in place.

In June 2020, the SJU community raised the Progress Pride Flag as a symbol of SJU's commitment to serve the LGBTQ+ community on the broader University of Waterloo campus. Flying the Pride Flag at SJU was the result of rich, meaningful conversations across the University, including the Board of Governors, Senate Council, Student Affairs, the student worshipping community, and the SJU Students' Union about the importance of communicating the message that all are welcome at SJU.

Priority #5: Academic Governance

To ensure that academic governance at St. Jerome's University is collegial, efficient, and sustainable

Commitments

5.1 Review membership structure of Senate Council and its standing committees

Following a recommendation of the Governance Committee of Senate Council, the SJU Senate Council approved the termination of the Finance Committee and a reassignment of its responsibilities to the Governance Committee. As a consequence of the collective bargaining process in 2018, a Library Advisory Committee with new terms of reference was established in lieu of the former Library Committee. In Spring 2018, Senate Council approved the establishment of the Experiential Learning Advisory Committee to provide input on experiential learning initiatives at SJU.

5.2 Review current resourcing support of Senate Council and its standing committees

To ensure proper record keeping and agenda management each committee of Senate Council has administrative support.

Indicators of Success:

- Provided administrative support to each committee of Senate Council
- Establishment of Teams infrastructure to enhance records management

5.3 Review the current administrative and organizational structures of departments and interdisciplinary programs

One focus of Working Group #5 was the governance of SJU's "non-attached" programs: Catholic Studies, Human Sciences, Medieval Studies, and the Master of Catholic Thought (MCT) program. These academic programs had no formal standing at Senate Council and no formal procedures in place to govern the programs. In some cases, the interests of a program would be represented at Senate Council or Academic

Committee by a department where a faculty member heading a program would be appointed. In other cases, such as with the MCT program, the VPAD's Office (either the VPAD or Associate Dean) would bring changes forward. As these are essentially interdisciplinary programs, Working Group #5 crafted a recommendation for each program that respected traditional practices and, to the greatest extend possible at the time, provided an interdisciplinary membership structure to govern these programs. These recommendations for governing SJU's unattached programs were approved in slightly revised form by Senate Council in 2017.

Working Group #5 also undertook a more comprehensive examination of SJU's departmental structure and faculty resources. As a way to maintain representative academic governance, to use faculty resources effectively, to provide meaningful academic leadership opportunities, and to respect the disciplinary expertise of each academic discipline, the Working Group proposed that the VPAD's Office consider opening a discussion of a revised academic department structure. During the 2017-2018 academic year, the VPAD opened a discussion with Academic Committee about a possible consolidation of departments. That discussion was followed up with a presentation by Dr. Cristina Vanin (Associate Dean) and Dr. Steven Bednarski (Special Advisor) that included a more detailed outline of a potential restructuring. The feedback from chairs was clear: there was, at that point in time, no interest in restructuring departments.

5.4 Establish meeting protocols for all academic governance bodies

Accomplishments

- Established protocols for all committees of Senate Council (e.g., agendas, notes taken by administrative assistants, approval of notes by committee members, and recognized approval processes)

5.5 Provide professional development opportunities for academic staff to enhance their knowledge and skills as academic leaders

SJU Chairs have access to the University of Waterloo academic leadership program. In 2015, the VPAD's Office held a Chair leadership seminar with the support of the UW academic leadership program.

Appendix A

Planning Committee and Working Group Membership

Academic Planning Committee:

Members of this group were Veronica Austen, Whitney, Gabriel Niccoli , Sue Brubacher, Lackenbauer, BJ Rye Jenna Stoddart (Student Rep) and Cristina Vanin

Working Group #1

Members of this group were Cristina Vanin (Associate Dean), Steven Bednarski (Special Advisor to the Vice President Academic and Dean [Special Advisor]), Jane Nicholas (Sexuality, Marriage, and Family Studies [SMF]/History), Veronica Austen (English), Sue Brubacher (Registrar), and Scott Kline (Vice President Academic and Dean [VPAD] and Chair).

Working Group #2

Members of this group were Scott Kline (VPAD), Sara Humphreys (English), a Students' Union Representative, Glen Lombard (Office of Student Experience [OSE]), and Sue Brubacher (Registrar and Chair).

Working Group #3

Members of this group are Scott Kline (VPAD), Cristina Vanin (Associate Dean), Susan Brophy (Sociology and Legal Studies [S/LS]), Chad Wriglesworth (English), and Steven Bednarski (Special Advisor and Chair).

Due to increasing convergence with Working Group #1, and after conversation with members of these working groups, Working Groups #1 and #3 were amalgamated to a single group focused on academic programming and research. The composition of this amalgamated working group was: Cristina Vanin (Associate Dean), Steven Bednarski (Special Advisor), Jane Nicholas (SMF/History), Chad Wriglesworth (English), Susan Brophy (S/LS), Sue Brubacher (Registrar), and Scott Kline (VPAD and Chair).

Working Group #4

Members of this group were Scott Kline (VPAD), Norm Klassen (English), Glen Lombard (OSE), Sue Brubacher (Registrar), and Cristina Vanin (Associate Dean and Chair).

Working Group #5

Members of this group were Cristina Vanin (Associate Dean), Steven Bednarski (Special Advisor), David Perrin (Religious Studies), John Greenwood (CAS), and Scott Kline (VPAD and Chair).