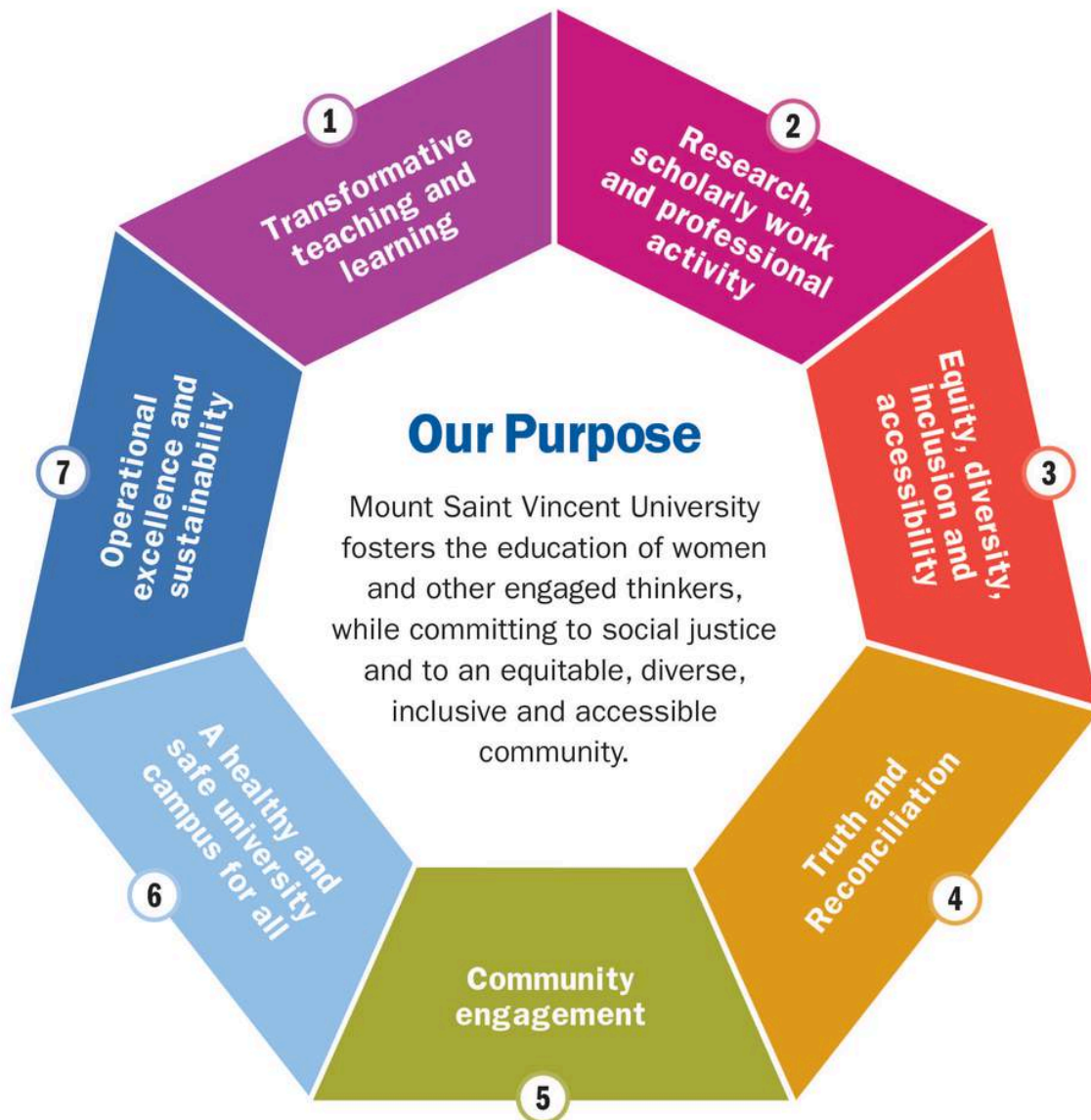


MOUNT
SAINT VINCENT
UNIVERSITY

**STRATEGIC PLAN
PROGRESS HIGHLIGHTS
JUNE 2023 - JUNE 2024**



Strength Through Community

MSVU Strategic Plan | 2021–2028

Our Vision

Mount Saint Vincent University is a model creative teaching and research that nurtures socially responsible global citizens

Our Mission

The advancement of women and girls, inspired by its strong tradition of social responsibility.

The delivery of academic excellence through a rich and rewarding university experience.

The pursuit of knowledge: scholarship, teaching and intellectual endeavours of the highest quality.

The promotion of accessibility through flexible learning opportunities and services.

Our Values

Academic Freedom
Accountability
Creativity
Engagement
Professionalism
Respect



Theme 1: Transformative teaching and learning

Promote an inclusive, dynamic, current and personalized teaching and learning environment focusing on nurturing informed, critical, socially responsible and socially just global citizens.

MSVU Co-Op Program celebrates 45 years

MSVU co-op, internship and work experience students have contributed to the success of their employer organizations while simultaneously building their future careers for 45 years. The consistency of long-term partnerships with local employers speaks strongly to the caliber of our students, our programs and the faculty and administrative teams who work every day to deliver an exceptional curriculum for students.

Student award winners

Mature student Nanette Black is among the 2024 recipients of the [Frank H. Sobey Awards](#) for Excellence in Business Studies, recognizing her entrepreneurialism, employment experience and commitment to community support. The award is accompanied by a \$45,000 prize.

MSVU Modern Languages student Olivia Bazot was recently named only one of two 2024 recipients of the [Prix du Consulat general de France dans les Provinces atlantiques](#). Olivia is the third MSVU student to receive this award - a testament to the strength of our students and to the work of our faculty.

We celebrated many other student award winners at our [2024 academic awards receptions](#) and [Best of the Blue Awards](#).

Modern Languages announces agreement with ACUFC for Student Bursaries for French

The Modern Languages Department announced in November 2023 the recent signature of a new agreement with the Association des collèges et des universités canadiennes (ACUFC). In the 2024-2025 academic year, the Department will distribute 12 French as a Second Language bursaries valued at \$3,000 each to students taking five courses in French out of ten courses during the next academic year. To be eligible, students must have completed their secondary school studies at an English-language institution.

Online/distance learning

While we REMAIN strong in our offerings, we plan to soon undertake a full evaluation of our online/distance learning opportunities. This will further access to education to those who either cannot attend campus ever or often.



Theme 2: Research, scholarly work and professional activity

Advance research, scholarly work and professional activity among faculty, staff and students, especially as it relates to the advancement of women, girls and other marginalized and underrepresented groups, social responsibility and social justice.

Dr. Tamara Franz-Odendaal: AAAS Fellow

In April 2024, Dr. Tamara Franz-Odendaal was announced as a [Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science](#) (AAAS) – one of the most distinguished honors in the scientific community. Such significant recognition is a tribute to Dr. Franz-Odendaal's long-standing leadership in the scientific field and in prioritizing the principles of EDIA in research and STEM fields in particular.

Shannex Centre for Workforce Wellbeing

A \$500,000 gift to MSVU from Shannex announced in May 2024, will support the establishment of a new [Shannex Centre for Workforce Wellbeing](#), including a new research chair, new learning opportunities for students and emerging scholars, and new research on innovative care practices and nutrition for residents.

Research funding

A number of MSVU researchers have received new funding, including:

- A CFI grant for Dr. David Awde's lab (Biology); the funding from the John R. Evans Leaders Fund was in the amount of \$313,886.
- Canada Research Chair renewals for Dr. Zachary Zimmer (Global Aging and Community) and Dr. Jessie-Lee McIsaac (Early Childhood: Diversity and Transitions).
- Approximately \$500,000 in research grant support for Dr. Tamara Franz-Odendaal's groundbreaking work on the impact of space travel on the skeleton. This funding includes \$150,000 from the Canadian Space Agency, a \$320,000 Infrastructure grant from the Canada Foundation for Innovation and the John R. Evans Leaders Fund, matching funds from Research NS, and in-kind support from MSVU. Additional funding from an NSERC Discovery Grant (\$50,000/year) also supports this research.
- [Health research awards for three MSVU undergraduate students](#) and [four graduate students](#) from Research Nova Scotia.
- NSERC undergraduate student research awards for several MSVU students.



Theme 2: Research, scholarly work and professional activity **(continued)**

Alexa McDonough Institute revitalization

Work is being undertaken to revitalize the Alexa McDonough Institute (AMI) after a period of dormancy (i.e. no Chair). Steps are being taken to hire an event coordinator and reconstitute the AMI Steering Committee. Engaging a new Chair will be among the first considerations of the new Steering Committee.

The Honourable Margaret Norrie McCain legacy gift

Mrs. McCain is a passionate and accomplished advocate for quality early childhood education and has made a [legacy donation of \\$10 million](#) to the university in support of teaching, research and practice on early childhood education.

Conversation Canada

MSVU is a partner with The Conversation Canada – an independent source of news and views, from the academic and research community, delivered direct to the public. Through this partnership, MSVU faculty can publish stories which are then republished under creative commons license by media outlets around the globe. Some of the recent pieces published by MSVU authors include:

- [The legal system must show more compassion to survivors of sexual abuse](#)
(Dr. Deborah Norris, Family Studies, co-author)
- [Canada is falling behind other countries in meeting the needs of former youth in care](#)
(Dr. Jacquie Gahagan, AVP Research, co-author)
- [Stop breaking women's hearts at work: 7 ways to make workplaces better for cardiovascular health](#)
(Dr. Shannan Grant, Applied Human Nutrition, co-author)



Theme 3: Equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility

MSVU will be a safe and welcoming place for all through our unwavering commitment to equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility (EDIA).

African Nova Scotian Community Pathways Navigator

Amelie Gero was welcomed to the role of African Nova Scotian Community Pathways Navigator at MSVU in April 2024. This position is funded by the Windsor Foundation, with a mandate to assess community needs and campus services so that we can develop a plan for improved engagement and service of African Nova Scotian communities.

EDIA data collection project

The University received funding from the Canada Research Chairs Program to undertake an EDIA data analysis project. The goals of this project are to provide a clear understanding of granting agency data reporting requirements and facilitate data collection, storage and reporting mechanisms across a variety of sources toward an accurate depiction of the experiences and perspectives of equity-denied groups across our campus.

MountAbility stoles

MountAbility 2023 graduate [Megan Pegg](#) has created special stoles to be worn over the shoulders of MountAbility program graduates at convocation in celebration of their accomplishment.

Black and Indigenous Speaker Series

Organized by the MSVU Research Office, the [Black and Indigenous Speaker Series](#) highlights the scholarly work of Black and Indigenous scholars from across Turtle Island. The purpose of this series is to initiate important conversation by inviting Black and Indigenous scholars to share their knowledge, worldviews, and contributions to their respective academic fields. Recent speakers have included Randy Headley, Dr. Krista Collier Jarvis and Dr. Barb Hamilton-Hinch.



Theme 3: Equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility **(continued)**

A diverse approach to student recruitment

Throughout the most recent student recruitment season (fall 2024/winter 2025), the student recruitment team continued outreach in a diversity of regions, including visits to Latin America, Southeast Asia, the Caribbean and West Africa. At the same time, the team visited high schools across Atlantic Canada and other Canadian provinces, and completed a six-week tour of every Nova Scotia Community College campus, meeting with prospective students and staff.

Assisi Hall interior renovations

In Assisi Hall (residence), two bedroom suites were renovated to include accessible beds, wardrobes and sinks. A new fully accessible washroom was created, including an automatic door opener, roll-in shower stall, height appropriate sink and lavatory with support bars and visual colour contrasting. An accessible laundry facility was also included in the renovation.

Assisi ramp upgrade

The exterior ramp entrance from the Assisi parking lot into the Assisi building has been completely replaced and upgraded to meet the latest Accessibility Standards.



Theme 4: Truth and Reconciliation

MSVU is committed to Truth and Reconciliation and to promoting Indigenous world views in the work of the institution. A focus on women and girls is critically important to this work.

Red Dress Day 2024

[MSVU marked Red Dress Day](#) in person and on social media on Friday, May 3. A number of red dresses were hung from the trees on campus and the Indigenous Student Centre team hosted a gathering featuring guest speaker Denise Pictou Maloney. Denise is the daughter of Indigenous activist Annie Mae Aquash who was murdered at 30 years of age.

Kinu Tourism project

The Kinu Project team, in collaboration with MSVU Business and Tourism faculty and staff together with Indigenous community partners and tourism professionals, continues to engage in curriculum renewal to create an Indigenous-informed Tourism and Hospitality Management Program. The first cohort of students will begin in September 2024

MSVU and King's launch first Indigenous course in Communication Studies

Led by Trina Roache, an award-winning journalist and assistant professor in the School of Journalism, Writing and Publishing at the University of King's College and a member of the Glooscap First Nation, the new [Indigenous Media Literacy course](#) (GPRL 6203 / PBRL 4405) aims to critically analyze the representations of Indigenous peoples in the media and explore ways to reimagine a decolonized media landscape.

Truth and Reconciliation Committee

The Truth and Reconciliation Committee (formed in late 2022) has since struck three working groups to advance MSVU's work in Truth and Reconciliation and undertaken a series of member orientation sessions. The Truth and Reconciliation Committee is made up of Indigenous and non-Indigenous faculty, staff and students.

Exhibit on the Two-Eyed Seeing Program: "The Lifecycle of the Boat"

The MSVU Art Gallery featured an exhibit on the Two-Eyed Seeing Program called "The Lifecycle of the Boat." This exhibit, sponsored by the Two-Eyed Seeing Program, Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey, and the MSVU Art Gallery, represented relationships that make this program possible in a tangible/ literal way, featuring activities that showcase Western and Indigenous sciences, strengths and synergies. The exhibit centered around a boat built, painted, blessed and launched by Mi'kmaq youth from Sipekne'katik (Indian Brook) and Wasoqopa'q (Acadia) with mentors from Sipekne'katik (Indian Brook), Wasoqopa'q (Acadia), Millbrook, and Pictou Landing Communities, the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic, MSVU (Child & Youth Study and Applied Human Nutrition), and elsewhere. The boat building and painting workshop (2022) featured artist Alan Sylliboy, Millbrook, and water walker and grassroots grandmother, Dorene Bernard, Sipekne'katik, and others.



Theme 5: Community engagement

MSVU will build stronger societies together by enhancing access to education, partnering with communities to identify and solve problems and building a culture of collaboration where no voices are silenced and all can engage.

Child Study Centre expansion

MSVU is preparing for a critical expansion initiative that will help us address the significant unmet need for childcare in our community. In May 2024, the [federal and provincial governments announced \\$5 million in funding for the project](#). The expansion will provide additional care for infants and toddlers – something we know is much needed based on our waitlist and the parent inquiries we regularly receive. The new Child Study Centre's capacity as a teaching and research space will also expand significantly, contributing to unmatched educational opportunities for Child and Youth Study students and providing professional development for Early Childhood Educators.

Hosting Michelle Obama

MSVU joined with a number of other local organizations to host former U.S. First Lady Michelle Obama in Halifax this past October as part of our 150th anniversary celebrations. Our focus was on providing event access to underrepresented individuals. Through the HER Impact and Diversity Delegation programs, we made it possible for a diverse group of more than 700 girls, women, youth and emerging leaders to attend.

New Bilateral Agreement with the Province

In April, we entered into a new one-year Bilateral Agreement with the Province of Nova Scotia, replacing the previous Memorandum of Understanding with universities. The new agreement provides for a 2% increase to the university's operating grant conditional on providing a strategic alignment proposal to government.

MOU with the Discovery Centre

After a very positive inaugural meeting, the University is exploring an MOU with the Discovery Centre for early childhood education. Significant credit is due to Myra Freeman, MSVU champion and Chair of the Discovery Centre Board, to Dov Bercovici, CEO of the Discovery Centre, and MSVU Associate Professor and Chair of Child and Youth Study Christine McLean. While discussions are in the early stages, they have been extremely positive.

11th Annual Education Digital Marketing Awards

MSVU's 150th Anniversary campaign (dubbed "Challenging the status quo" and featuring MSVU representatives including faculty and alum) earned a Merit Award in the category of "Social Media Content – Campaign" at the 2023 Education Digital Marketing Awards.



Theme 5: Community engagement **(continued)**

MSVU storytelling

Over the course of the past year, Communications & Marketing shared more than 130 unique stories spotlighting a breadth of people, programs and projects that make MSVU the special organization it is.

Famous 5 Foundation – Maquette Tour

[MSVU hosted the Famous 5 Maquette on campus](#) last fall, with an opening event on October 11, 2023 attended by women from all levels of politics, as well as Frances Wright, CEO and Co-Founder of the Famous 5 Foundation. The Maquette stayed on display for the MSVU and broader communities until mid-February 2024.

New microcredential programs

MSVU delivered its first two non-credit pilot microcredential courses in the fall of 2023, including the community-focused Continue Caring (CC) and professionally-focused Case Management Fundamentals (CMF). Both received overwhelmingly positive feedback from participants. The Teaching and Learning Centre has since been working with various MSVU stakeholders to develop robust processes, aligned with the Nova Scotia Microcredential Framework and existing MSVU policies and procedures, for proposing, approving, developing, and reviewing non-credit microcredential programming. MSVU is currently developing a new microcredential project to support experienced frontline continuing care workers in preparing for leadership roles. The project includes a collegial development partnership with Northwood and Shannex, and has been funded through a \$150,000 grant from the NS Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration. Forty participants will start the program in Fall 2024 at no cost to them with an aim to review the program for potential delivery beyond the funded period.

MSVU 150th Anniversary

Throughout 2023 (and even into 2024), MSVU undertook a number of special celebrations to mark our 150th anniversary, for example:

- [150 people profiles](#) showcasing alumni, staff, faculty and community members.
- [150th anniversary Gala](#) - On November 2, 2023, 600+ local business, community and government leaders, friends of MSVU, donors, alumni, faculty, staff and students gathered for a sold-out gala at the Halifax Convention Centre. The event featured a series of special presentations that together told the unmatched story of MSVU.
- Time capsule opening - In 1993, a time capsule was tucked behind a plaque on the second floor of Evaristus Hall to commemorate the opening of the [Dr. Catherine Wallace](#) Centre for Women in Science at MSVU. [Watch the video of the time capsule opening here.](#)
- This is just a snapshot of our 150th activities; see <https://www.msvu.ca/150-years-in-review-marking-a-legacy-of-challenging-the-status-quo/> for more.



Theme 6: A healthy and safe university campus for all

People are the foundation of our university and we will work to further develop a campus environment where the health and well-being of faculty, staff and students is paramount.

Courage to Act 2024

MSVU Student Sexual Health and Safety Educators Lillian Flynn and Cassidy Plagos were the recent recipients of the Courage to Act 2024 Award. Courage to Act is a federally funded initiative to address and prevent gender-based violence on Canadian campuses.

Sexual violence prevention training

We participated in a 5-day training session in the summer of 2023, as organized by the provincial sexual violence prevention group. The course was designed to train internal investigators for sexual assault cases at each institution in Nova Scotia. Additionally, student leaders from across campus, including RAs & Dons, Orientation student leaders, Mount Mentors, and Peer Support Workers, all received Waves of Change sexual violence prevention training in August.

Intercultural Spring Fair

In late March 2024, an Intercultural Spring Fair was held in the McCain Atrium. The Fair was a celebration of cultural diversity through sharing of food, music and traditions which showcased traditional meals and cultures from the home countries of international students.

Policy Against Sexual Violence

Following Board approval of the updated Policy Against Sexual Violence, a communications working group was formed to disseminate information on the policy on campus.



Theme 7: Operational excellence and sustainability

Build a well-resourced university that will remain financially, operationally and environmentally sustainable in a constantly evolving geo-political and environmental climate.

Study Permit Cap

In late January 2024, the federal government announced measures to decrease the number of study permits awarded to international students for 2024/2025. Tremendous efforts to address change have been put forth by the Registrar's Office, the International Student Centre, Financial Services and our University Relations teams. Ultimately, our university community is made better by the presence of international students on our campus, so while perhaps laborious, the work to respond to this new reality will ideally be rewarded.

Budget

We were able to avoid a projected shortfall at the end of the 2023/2024 fiscal year through a number of initiatives, including a successful summer melt program, increased recruitment and retention efforts, cost savings decisions, increased conference income, increased efforts to fill residence spots, etc. Our recently approved 2024/2025 budget prioritizes student-focused investments, with a small shortfall anticipated (of about \$200,000) largely due to a challenging fiscal context. We will work to mitigate that anticipated shortfall through a number of means, including pursuing revenue generation opportunities and efficient resource management throughout the year.

New AVP People and Culture role

The search process for the new leader is in its final stages. The portfolio will oversee both the Human Resources Office, as well as the newly established Equity Office. Core objectives for the incumbent will be the development of retention and training strategies and the creation and review of processes and policies with equity at the forefront. The need for this role was identified as part of our work on the Dimensions action plan which aims to advance EDIA in research and across universities broadly.

Strategic Enrolment Management

MSVU is in the process of developing its first strategic enrolment management plan. This plan will guide MSVU's recruitment, enrolment, and overall student experience for the next five years. Dr. Marisha Caswell was hired as Senior Advisor, Strategic Enrolment Management in a one-year contract to begin this work. Between December 2023 and April 2024, Dr. Caswell held 14 student focus groups as well as consultation sessions with 15 staff groups and 13 academic departments and committees. In May 2024, she delivered a report on those consultations. An important first step in the new SEM plan development, the report is an extensive summary of campus community input on everything from course availability, sequencing and scheduling to student communication, cost of living, diversity and inclusion, and more.



Theme 7: Operational excellence and sustainability **(continued)**

Cybersecurity education

IT&S continued its cybersecurity awareness and education initiatives for students, faculty and staff, encouraging everyone to stay up-to-date on emerging threats and to take the free training offered by the university through Beauceron. Currently, administrative employees (who have the most access to data) have the highest rate of completion for the Beauceron training (at 88%).

Risk matrix

An internal team is currently working on creating a new risk matrix and related processes for the university. The aim is to have 'risk management' as a standing agenda item at our monthly Management Forum meetings to help inform risk mitigation activities.

Advancement bootcamp and priority setting

A development workshop for Deans (Advancement Bootcamp), presented by the Canadian Council for the Advancement of Education, was held in Halifax. MSVU attendees included Deans, members of the senior leadership team, and advancement staff. Further, the leadership team participated in a case setting priority exercise in the fall facilitated by KCI. The output of this work will inform major gift opportunities and be the focus of a new Major Gifts position.

Connecting with alumni

The Alumni Relations team has recently recruited new staff members (filling positions that were vacant) and been leading a number of initiatives, including the most recent outreach to capture updated data from grads (with over 800 records received) and a number of events connecting with both newer and older alumni – including mentorship programming, Reunion Weekend 2023, seasonal events and more.

Bermuda visit

In late January 2024, after an absence of a couple of years, MSVU made a return visit to Bermuda to connect with prospective students alumni. The trip, which was attended by President Dickinson and a representative from each of Student Recruitment and Alumni Relations, included a number of recruitment stops at local schools, as well as a special alumni social. In addition, President Dickinson met with representatives of our partner institution Bermuda College and the Bermuda Secretary of Education. Dr. Dickinson's presence in Bermuda was covered by local media.



Theme 7: Operational excellence and sustainability **(continued)**

Climate Action Charter

MSVU is now a signatory to the CEO Climate Action Charter. Co-created in partnership with business leaders across Halifax, the Charter encourages signatories to take meaningful climate action using operational levers within their respective organizations to do so. The Charter will support the growth of the green economy and materially reduce carbon emissions, and will enable Halifax to meet both municipal and provincial climate action goals.

Marking Earth Day

Dozens of MSVU staff, students and faculty marked Earth Day 2024 by tackling a number of special groundskeeping efforts on campus, including collecting garbage and leaves (filling an impressive 58 garbage bags in just one hour!) and prepping community garden beds for the new growing season. The event was organized by Facilities Management, in particular the Earth Day Committee, and also included a number of exhibitors and vendors, a plant swap, and lunch.

Building an e-bike program on campus

Thanks to a \$50,000 grant from HCl3's Accelerating to Zero Grant Program and in-kind support from Zen E-Bikes, MSVU will be making available to students, faculty and staff a fleet of 15 electric bikes for travel on campus and off (e.g. to work, etc. for students). This pilot program will also feature a new solar powered e-bike storage and charging station on campus.

An addendum

I want to acknowledge that February and March 2024 were difficult months for Mount Saint Vincent University, as we collectively experienced a work stoppage by the MSVU Faculty Association (representing full-time faculty, librarians and lab instructors). While the strike action itself is now behind us, it is the case that we are jointly working to come back to a place of genuine unity. I am confident that, with time, we will get there, and I commit that I will do all that I can to be a positive partner in making that the case.

I would note that post-strike, both the MSVU Senate and the MSVU Administration turned our immediate focus to students – our common mission – in an effort to remedy the implications of the strike on them. On March 8, 2024, Senate voted to implement a number of changes to support students who missed classes due to the strike, and they communicated the mechanisms for doing so widely. As well, Administration immediately turned its attention to providing financial reimbursements to students, which was based upon the university's net savings from faculty salaries and benefits for the duration of the work stoppage.

More recently, we have been hearing from participants in the Students for Liberation of Palestine movement. In our conversations, we are seeking to ensure that we are prioritizing the specific perspectives of MSVU students. These are challenging times globally. And these are particularly difficult times for some members of our community; we are here to support all affected MSVU community members.

I look forward to continued collaboration with all MSVU faculty, staff and students across a number of areas as we work to prioritize access and impact for all, and foster Strength Through Community.



Dr. Joël Dickinson
President and Vice-Chancellor
Mount Saint Vincent University



[MSVU.CA/STRATEGICPLAN](https://msvu.ca/strategicplan)