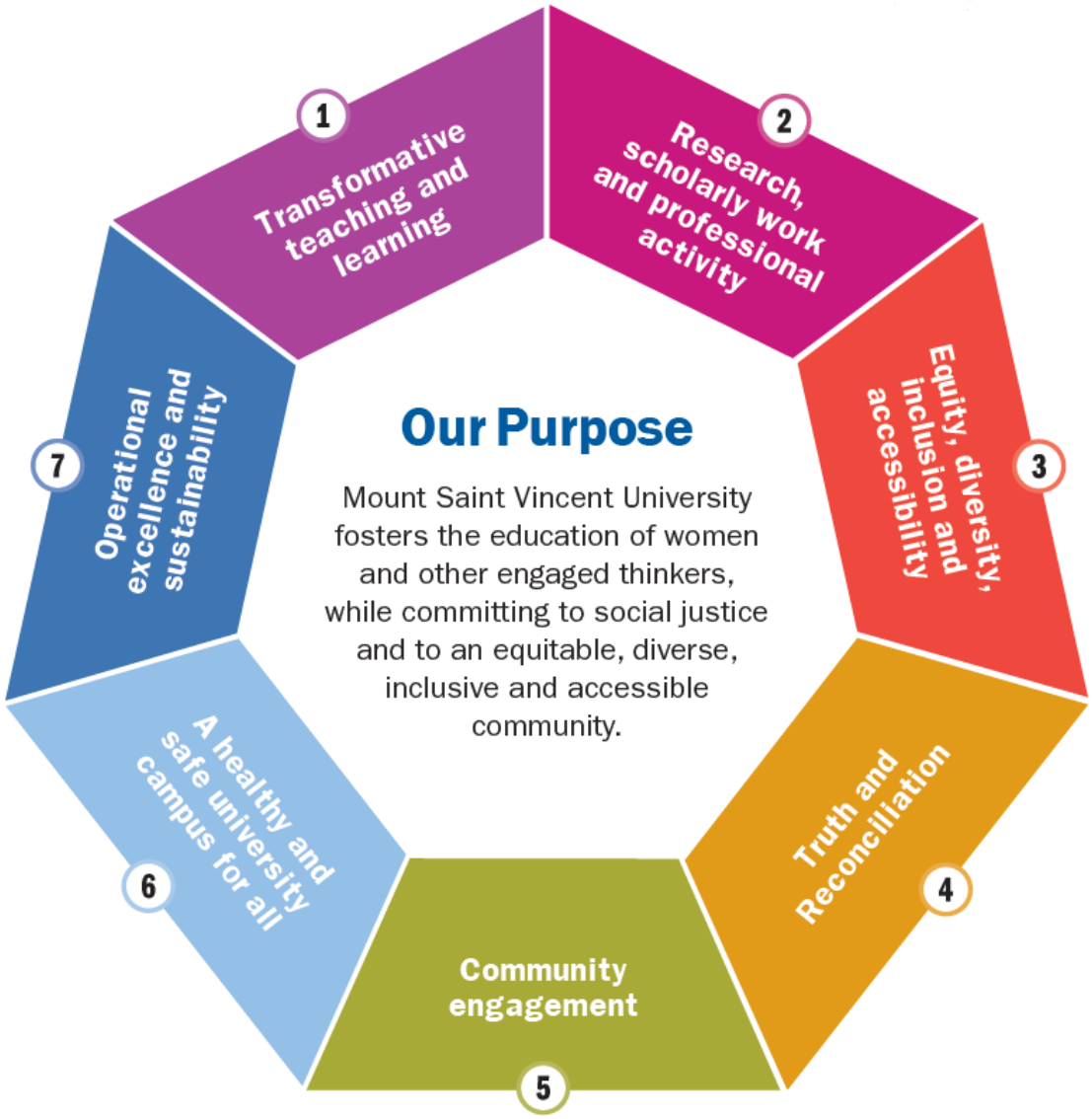


MOUNT SAINT VINCENT UNIVERSITY

Strategic Plan Progress Highlights

June 2026



Strength Through Community

The Strategic Plan progress updates in this summary reflect the dedication of many across the MSVU community – faculty, staff and administrators, students, alumni, donors, supporters, and partners. The reporting period includes progress between January and June 2026. This report reflects our collective commitment to MSVU and embodies the true power of *Strength Through Community*.

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.

Highlights

- The following new programs have recently launched, are soon to launch, or are in development:
  - Doctor of Psychology program starting in September 2026;
  - Major and Honours programs in Aging and Family Science started earlier this year;
  - Master of Science program pending review by MPHEC (approved by Senate);
  - Minor in Health Communication approved by Senate.
- Microcredentials delivered or developed by Continuing Education since January 2026 include:
  - Continuing Care: Ready to Lead (R2L);
  - Community Engagement: Meaning and Methods;
  - Case Management Fundamentals; and
  - SHIFT (a career development program for current MSVU students).

SEM Update

MSVU officially entered its SEM era with the launch of the Strategic Enrolment Management (SEM) plan in January. Following the launch, work began with SEM Champions from Management Forum to identify key implementation priorities for 2026-2027. While several priorities focus on recruitment efforts, the SEM plan reminds us that enrolment is also about retention. As such, key implementation priorities will focus on efforts that improve student retention, including the development of a more data-informed approach to course scheduling, enhanced student engagement guidelines and resources, and the development of resources and training to help build connections across departments and ensure a more consistent student experience at MSVU. The SEM era will also see a stronger focus on retention by intentionally incorporating SEM perspectives into existing committees and processes at MSVU.

3MT Competition

In April, the international Three Minute Thesis competition (or 3MT) returned to MSVU after being paused by the pandemic. The return of the event was highly successful with 11 students presenting their research, creative, or scholarly work, representing every faculty at the university. MSVU winner and graduate Public Relations student Dina Sallam will attend the regional competition in June at Saint Mary's University. Dina shared her research examining how visual elements in health care facilities function as communication tools, and the challenges that arise from inconsistent or ad hoc design practices. The competition culminates annually with an international showcase of national winners.

New Programming Updates

We look forward to welcoming our first cohort of Doctor of Psychology (PsyD) students in the fall. A potential new Master of Science has been passed in the Senate and is under review at MPHEC. Senate has also passed a new minor in Health Communication. Mount Saint Vincent University's new Major and Honours programs in Aging and Family Science were launched earlier this year.

President's Visiting Lecture Series

In March, Dr. Sarah Elaine Eaton delivered a public lecture titled *Beyond Plagiarism: Fostering Academic Integrity in the Age of Generative AI,* along with a faculty workshop called *Applying the Postplagiarism Framework,* as a part of the President's Visiting Lecture Series. Both events had excellent participation, with more than 130 participants including partner institutions and the broader community. To support MSVU's continued growth around academic integrity, Dr. Eaton also met with the student union and the Registrar's Office and delivered a presentation and Q&A session for Management Forum. In collaboration with Saint Mary's University, she also served as a keynote at a full-day faculty symposium open to MSVU, which also featured MSVU scholar, Dr. Johan Woodworth (Faculty of Education).

Teaching and Learning (TLC) Communities of Practice

The TLC piloted Community of Practice (CoP) spaces to bring together faculty members interested in exploring issues of common pedagogy: experiential learning and Generative AI response. Participants shared current promising practices, identified barriers to implementing new ideas, and strategized ways to dismantle them. TLC and the Co-op and WIL office also partnered with the University of Waterloo's Experiential Learning Centre to host a special webinar on Course-based Experiential Learning for MSVU faculty, in collaboration with the Experiential Learning CoP. Given their success, both CoPs are expected to continue next year, with plans to introduce a third on Universal Design for Learning.

TLC offered 18 events in the winter term with a collective attendance of 373 people, including faculty presenters at several events. Dr. Bernadette Russo (Cultural Studies) led a reflective practice session on iterative assignment design, while two part-time faculty Shannon Monk (Tourism and Hospitality Management) and Tyler Gould (Tourism and Hospitality Management) shared insights on teaching the Introduction to Mi'kmaw/Indigenous Tourism course for the first time.

Celebration of Teaching and Learning

The TLC Celebration of Teaching and Learning in April highlighted teaching achievements from across the year. The event featured department chairs Dr. Janice Keefe (Aging and Family Science), Dr. Derek Fisher (Psychology), and Dr. Maria Matthews (Business and Tourism), as well as the 2025 Teaching Excellence award winners Dr. Karyn McLellan (Mathematics), Roy Jamieson (Public Relations), and Shane Theunissen (Child and Youth Study) who offered insights into their classrooms and teaching philosophies.

Continuing Education

Since January 2026, MSVU Continuing Education (CE) has continued development and delivery of a range of non-credit microcredentials and other programs. Ready to Lead (R2L) received funding through a WIPSI grant from the Nova Scotia Department of Labour, Skills, and Immigration for a second delivery scheduled to conclude this June with registration of 18 participants as of May 1, 2026. Development of a new microcredential focused on community engagement has been completed with delivery expected in Fall 2026, alongside the previously delivered Case Management Fundamentals microcredential.

In partnership with MSVU Career Services and other supporting units, CE offered an updated SHIFT microcredential at no cost to students in 2026, with 140 students participating. CE is continuing its work in partnership with external groups including the Nova Scotia Disability Support Program, Discover Halifax, Centre for Women in Business, and others. Discussions are ongoing with other prospective community partners to expand non-credit programming in alignment with MSVU's mission, vision, and values with further updates anticipated by Fall 2026.

New Bursary

The **Jessie Jollymore Endowed Award in Applied Human Nutrition**, established in 2021 through $12,600 in donations from the MSVU community in recognition of Jessie Jollymore's honorary degree, has now reached a stage where it is ready to generate an annual payout, and a first award will be granted. With signed Terms of Reference finalized in February 2026, the endowment will support students in the Applied Human Nutrition program, with consideration given to community involvement and financial need and preference to Hope Blooms alumni. The award is administered in accordance with the University's Endowment Management Policy, and the Faculty of Applied Human Nutrition will oversee recipient selection.

Science Atlantic BAAS conference 2026

Nine students from the Department of Biology presented original research through posters and oral presentations at the 2026 Science Atlantic conference (Mount Allison, Sackville NB), engaging with peers from across the Atlantic provinces. Emily Murphy (Insect Physiology Lab) won the Biology Best Communication Award, for her presentation on ladybeetle thermal tolerance plasticity.

12th Annual NENA Federation Conference

MSVU student Keith Gallie was recognized at the 12th Annual NENA Federation Conference in Pennsylvania where he presented his work and received the Best Poster Presentation award representing MSVU. The conference connects professionals and students in tourism and hospitality management education. In collaboration with peers from Indiana University of Pennsylvania, he also earned top honours in the Student AI Competition, highlighting the growing role of innovation and artificial intelligence in the field.

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.

Highlights

- $1.4M in Tri-agency funding was awarded to MVSU researchers in 24-25*. *(*25/26 data not yet available due to approval/announcement timing)*
- $1.5M USD was awarded to Dr. Kyly Whitfield by the Weiss Asset Management Foundation for research on maternal and infant nutrition.
- The Federal Dimensions program awarded MVSU and partner institutions $100K to address barriers to EDIA in research. MSVU is also a partner on another recently funded Dimensions project (awarded a separate $100K).

Research Training and Events

The MSVU Research Office hosted four events, including a Research Refresh training session, a lunch-and-learn with Reid Sutherland of Mitacs, and two talks as part of the MSVU Black and Indigenous Speakers series. These talks were held on January 22 (Dr. Debbie Martin, "*Indigenous identity policies and their unintended harms*") and February 24 (Dr. Rachel Zellars, "*Black Thriving in Impossibility*").

Research Funding

Dr. Kyly Whitfield, Chair and Associate Professor in the Applied Human Nutrition Department at Mount Saint Vincent University (MSVU), recently received USD$1.49 million from the Weiss Asset Management Foundation to co-lead a three-year research study examining whether thiamine (vitamin B1) supplementation during pregnancy and early childhood better supports infant brain development.

Dr. Jacqueline Gahagan, AVP Research received a Dimensions Canada grant of $100,000 for the project *EDIA Ambassadors: Expanding EDIA capacity in small and medium-sized post-secondary education institutions through a resource sharing platform in the Atlantic region and nationally* in partnership with UPEI, UNB, Université Sainte-Anne, and NSCC. As noted by NSERC, these grants support the creation and sharing of evidence-based tools and resources to address systemic barriers across the research community and drive meaningful cultural change across Canada's research ecosystem.

Dr. Tamara Franz-Odendaal in partnership with Dr. David McGee (UNB) received a Dimensions Canada grant of $100,000 for the project *From Scholarship Reconsidered to Scholarship Recognized: Adapting Boyer's model to integrate EDID into Canadian tenure and promotion processes*.

Dr. Gerald Tembrevilla of the MSVU Faculty of Education, in collaboration with Dr. Mike Bowen (MSVU) and Dr. Don Haas (Paleontological Research Institution), was awarded one of the 2026 Atlantic OER Development Grants for a new book project on accessible, sign language–supported climate change education.

Insect Physiology Lab

The Insect Physiology Lab is in the final stages of acquiring specialized equipment and reagents before bringing insects into the newly renovated space. Funding support for this work was provided by the Canada Foundation of Innovation (CFI), Research Nova Scotia (RNS), and MSVU. MSVU undergraduate students are actively working in the new space throughout the summer. A collaborative project with researchers at Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada is currently in progress to explore how insect crop pests respond to environmental variation related to climate change.

Special Recognitions

Dr. Jacqueline Gahagan, AVP Research, has been nominated for the Paul Harris Fellowship in recognition of exemplary service consistent with the Rotary Foundation's mission. Dr. Gahaghan has devoted their career and life to representing the interests of underserved communities; they have evaluated policy and programming interventions through sex and gender-based analyses.

Dr. Janice Keefe, Professor and Chair, Department of Aging and Family Science, has been reappointed as the Lena Isabel Jodrey Chair in Gerontology for an additional five-year term, and by association the Director of the Nova Scotia Centre on Aging.

Sandra Sawchuk, MSVU Librarian along with a colleague in Victoria, received a SSHRC Connections grant and an Explore grant for a research data management training event to be held in Halifax in September 2026.

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).

Highlights

- New EDIA community data collection systems are being developed at MSVU, with a new campus-wide census to launch soon.
- MSVU is serving as the host institution for the new Director of the Nova Scotia Post-Secondary Accessibility Capacity Building Collaborative (Dr. Mary Rita Holland), funded by Advanced Education.

EDIA Governance Committee

Membership for the newly constituted EDIA Governance Committee has been finalized. The committee will provide strategic oversight of EDIA commitments and initiatives and will serve as a coordinating body among committees, institutes, and employee groups engaged in EDIA related work across the university. It is also responsible for the approval and monitoring of the university's EDIA Action Plan, which has now been finalized and is pending review and approval by the EDIA Governance Committee.

Self-ID Questionnaire & Community Census

A new comprehensive self-identification questionnaire aimed at expanding and standardizing the EDIA data collected across the MSVU community has been finalized. The questionnaire will gather information on language, cultural, ethnic, and racial identity, as well as sexual and gender identity and disability status. The new questionnaire has been implemented for new faculty and staff recruitment, and we are working with IT&S to finalize plans for the rollout of a full campus census.

Accessibility Capacity Building Collaborative

In December 2025, Dr. Mary Rita Holland began her appointment as Director of the Nova Scotia Post-Secondary Accessibility Capacity Building Collaborative, funded by the Department of Advanced Education, with MSVU serving as the host institution. Since that time, she has completed an environmental scan of the sector's accessibility initiatives and will be leading a day-long retreat with accessibility representatives from participating institutions in June.

Accessibility and Emergency Evacuation Planning

Over the past year, the university has updated procedures to better support individuals who may require assistance during emergency evacuations. Students, faculty and staff with accessibility challenges that may impact evacuation are able to complete a registration form to ensure they receive support in the event of an emergency.

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.

Highlights

- The Two-Eyed Seeing youth education program is celebrating its 10th year with new funding from NSERC.
- Departments across MSVU continue to expand their Indigenous-focused and Indigenous-informed programming, including almost 30 diverse courses.

First recipient of the Putu's Award

The Department of Communication Studies awarded the first recipient of the Putu's Award to Bachelor of Public Relations (BPR) student Kailee Poole. Established by Janet MacMillan, the award supports and encourages Indigenous students to pursue careers in communications. Kailee demonstrates a strong commitment to community-centred communication and academic excellence, along with a passion for making a meaningful impact through public relations. She embodies these values through her strong academic performance, thoughtful approach to storytelling, and engagement in initiatives that highlight the importance of inclusive and ethical communication practices.

New Indigenous focused course

CULS 2333: Global Indigeneities will debut in Fall 2026 and will explore diverse Indigenous identities and cultures through film, media, and art. Designed by Dr. Bernadette Russo, the course examines the themes of identity, sexuality, and gender, with case studies including the Sámi, Māori, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (Indigenous groups will change each time the course is offered). It examines how colonialism, race, and class shape lived experiences while highlighting relationships to land, kinship, resilience, and resistance.

NSERC funding renewed for Two-Eyed Seeing Program

The Two-Eyed Seeing Program received NSERC Promo Science funding for a fourth three-year term this spring. For over a decade, the Two-Eyed Seeing Program has used the guiding principle of Etuaptmumk (Two-Eyed Seeing) to develop programming for diverse learners and communities. With guidance from Elders, Knowledge Holders, community partners, and scientists, the program continues to foster learning through events and initiatives grounded in these teachings. The program is delivered in partnership by MSVU, Sipekne'katik First Nation, Pictou Landing First Nation, Wasoqopa'q Mi'kmaw Nation (Acadia), and Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey.

Marking Red Dress Day and Mi'kmaw History Month

May 5 marked Red Dress Day, a national day raising awareness of violence against Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQI+ people, while honouring victims and supporting families. At MSVU, a drop-in style event organized by the Indigenous Student Centre and the

Red Dress Day planning team, provided attendees with opportunities to engage with important conversations around awareness, remembrance, and advocacy. Participants created art, wrote postcards, viewed documentaries, and engaged in quiet reflection. A temporary art installation was created in and around the McCain Centre with red dresses donated by the campus community as reminders of the lives lost.

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.

Highlights

- A record 350+ participants attended the Girls Conference at MSVU.
- The Campus Exchange on Bill 12, the budget, and bilateral agreement was our best attended to date at more than 150 faculty, staff and students.
- Our announcement of Lisa LaFlamme, O.C., O.Ont., as MSVU's spring honorary degree recipient garnered an incredible 297,595 views across Facebook and Instagram.

Campus Exchange: Bill 12, Budget, and Bilateral Agreement

Communications and Marketing worked with the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) to host a Campus Exchange focused on Bill 12, institutional budgets and the bilateral agreement. The event was our best attended Campus Exchange to date. It featured candid presentations and a Q&A led by ELT and was open to all faculty, staff, and students. Following the session, Communications worked with the Vice-President Administration to establish a mechanism for faculty and staff to anonymously submit their ideas for expenditure reductions and efficiency improvements.

Bermuda Alumni and Student Event

On January 27, MSVU hosted its annual alumni and student event at the Bermuda Underwater Exploration Institute where over 50 alumni and prospective students came together to celebrate all things MSVU. This joint initiative between Recruitment, the President's Office, and Advancement was designed to advance MSVU's strategic priorities by strengthening alumni engagement, supporting student recruitment, deepening institutional partnerships, and reinforcing MSVU's presence in a key international region.

Girls Conference

This year's event featured the theme *Lead to Inspire: Acts of Kindness, Moments of Courage*, and included a keynote by the Honourable Leah Martin, the first Indigenous MLA in Nova Scotia history. Her cabinet responsibilities include, Minister of L'nu Affairs, Minister responsible for the Advisory Council on the Status of Women Act, and Minister responsible for Youth. The conference also featured a trailblazer panel including Hannah Moscovitch, Sloan McKenzie, Jazmyne McLaughlin and Cindy Chang, plus a full day of engaging activities for the more than 350 attendees – a record number!

Child Study Centre Campaign

The first campaign prospecting event was held in April at the current Child Study Centre and was hosted by President and Vice-Chancellor Dr. Dickinson and Christine McLean, Associate Professor and Chair, Child & Youth Study. The evening consisted of four curated experiences

meant to highlight the world-class work that has been happening at the Child Study Centre for 50 years and spotlight how the new centre will create new opportunities. These experiences were led by Child Study Centre community members including the Inclusion Coordinator, a student completing their practicum at the centre, a former child and mom of the centre, and an MSVU researcher.

Student Recruitment U.S. Marketing Campaign

MSVU ran a pilot U.S. marketing campaign from December 18, 2025, to February 15, 2026, generating strong early-stage engagement and valuable market insights. Across Google, YouTube, and Meta platforms, the campaign nearly tripled U.S. website traffic compared to the previous year, demonstrating increased awareness in a lower-recognition market. The campaign resulted in three applications and demonstrated that Google non-branded search was the most cost-effective driver of applications. The results highlighted that the U.S. represents a longer-term recruitment opportunity requiring sustained awareness-building.

New Student Support Funds

The Robin McGee Memorial Scholarship

Dr. Robin Anne McGee (1961–2024) was a respected psychologist, author, and patient advocate in Nova Scotia. Established by her spouse, Andrew Hurst, this expendable scholarship supports students in MSVU's Doctor of Psychology (PsyD) program, reflecting Dr. McGee's commitment to child mental health and her vision of making the program accessible to local students. The renewable award recognizes exceptional applicants, with priority given to those from Acadia University.

Linda (MacIntyre) Brown Scholarship in Education

Established in 2014 by Linda (MacIntyre) Brown, BSc '67, BEd '68, and her husband Hugh Brown, this endowed scholarship now has annual spending exceeding $10K. The Brown family recently updated the scholarship to support two students from the Maritime provinces annually: one renewable award for a student entering the two-year Bachelor of Education program (up to two years), and one one-time award for a student in the 14-month Bachelor of Education program.

Fund Reports (Endowed and Expendable)

This year, we delivered just over 190 customized fund reports to our donors, highlighting the impact of their generosity with tailored narratives, financial updates, and fund-specific achievements. These reports reflected the status of MSVU's Endowment as of March 31, 2025, as well as each endowed fund, giving donors a clear snapshot of fund value, activity, and support distributed. By providing donors with clear, individualized insights into how their gifts are moving our mission forward, we strengthened engagement, reinforced transparency, and deepened their connection to the causes they care about most. This personalized approach continues to enhance donor stewardship and supports long-term philanthropic relationships.

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.

Highlights

- This winter, we completed the thorough roll-out of MSVU's updated emergency response, including:
  - refreshed website content;
  - updated signage across campus;
  - new quick reference flipbooks in shared spaces; and
  - the replacement of outdated hardcopies.

Emergency Response Plan

MSVU implemented a new Emergency Response Plan (ERP) including the development of a number of new supporting documents, such as a brochure, emergency instructions posters, and an ERP quick reference flip book. These materials were shared with employees through website content updates and a community message from senior leadership. Work is also underway to review and update Departmental Emergency Plans.

First-aid kits and AED

Eight first aid response cabinets were installed across campus including at EMF 2nd floor, McCain 1st floor, Rosaria by the tunnel, Seton 4th floor, Evaristus 2nd floor, the Child Study Centre, Westwood 3rd floor, and the CAR 2nd floor. The cabinets were placed in key areas to ensure materials were readily available in the event first aid needs to be administered. The university has also acquired a new AED for the campus, bringing the total number of units on campus to 12.

Wellness Update

As a sub-committee of the Benefit Users Committee, the Wellness Committee has a mandate to design and implement a progressive wellness program to build and sustain a positive and healthy workplace and support employee well-being. Over the past few months, the committee has been busy organizing a range of events for faculty and staff including an upcoming employee appreciate week, the annual January Social, the Walk for Heart Health Challenge throughout February, and a series of workshops and lunch-and-learns that focused on movement, nutrition, and overall wellness.

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.

Highlights

- As part of our commitment to transparency and community engagement, we published a comprehensive report about the university's 2026/2027 operating budget.
- Fundraising revenues at MSVU increased an impressive 54% this fiscal year over last.

Budget Update

Like post-secondary institutions across the country, MSVU is facing a challenging fiscal environment marked by rising costs and declining enrolment, including a significant drop in international students due to changes in Federal study permit policy. This required difficult budget decisions this year to support long-term sustainability, including the layoff of seven employees -- an action not taken lightly. Despite these challenges, MSVU remains committed to high-quality programs, strong academic standards, and a supportive student experience. A history of sound financial stewardship positions the university to manage short-term pressures while working with the community to reduce costs and increase revenue. With sustained effort and innovation, MSVU will emerge stronger and continue to uphold its mission, vision, and values.

2025-2026 Fundraising Update (As of March 31, 2026)

- Goal: $3,000,000YTD
- Actual: $2,318,441.40
- Prior TD: $1,503,555.5,4
- YoY Variance: $814,885.86
- Percentage Change: +54%

IT&S

As part of ongoing efforts to strengthen institutional resilience, IT Services and the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) participated in a cybersecurity tabletop exercise designed to test preparedness and response protocols in a simulated incident scenario. The session provided an opportunity to walk through roles, decision-making processes, and communication strategies. The exercise evaluated response coordination, escalation procedures, and reinforced the importance of timely, consistent communication across the institution. Lessons learned from this exercise will inform future training, policy refinement, and incident response planning, further enhancing MSVU's readiness to address evolving cybersecurity risks.

Admissions Portal

The implementation of a new admissions portal is underway and will provide a streamlined, user-friendly experience designed to simplify the application process and enhance

engagement for prospective students. The project team has been working with the vendor on the development of a project timeline and plan.

Managers Training

Presented by People & Culture and Human Resources, the “Being a Manager at MSVU” training program will launch this summer. The training will be available to all employees who manage or have direct reports. This is the first of multiple modules which will be deployed to assist in training and upskilling our managers and highlighting tools available to them. People & Culture and Human Resources will also partner with other departments and groups at MSVU to further explore training topics to be covered at future training sessions.

Employee Benefits Review

The University’s Benefits Users Committee has met with consultants at HUB several times since the beginning of 2026, and the benefits review process is now underway. HUB has presented the committee with a draft timeline outlining proposed activities and key milestones. An employee survey is currently being developed, providing an opportunity for employees to share their perspectives on what they value in a benefits plan. The timing of the survey is being finalized.