



St. Thomas  
UNIVERSITY

# **Strategic Academic Plan 2025-30**

A Collaborative and  
Strong Future for  
**St. Thomas University**

# Strategic Academic Plan 2025-30

## PREAMBLE

As we embark on a new Strategic Plan for St. Thomas University, the academic mission must, as always, remain paramount as we seek to deliver what we promise to our students: a transformative educational experience where individuals from every background receive a world-class education in a challenging, responsive, and stimulating environment. The unique qualities of STU – the emphasis on people, ideas, and values – have been at the core of our growth and have propelled the success of our students and alumni.

To ensure we continue to build on our strengths and move forward with innovative programming to meet the demands of our changing world, all elements of the University must work together with a common vision as we begin implementing the *St. Thomas University Strategic Plan 2025-2030 to become the leading choice for students seeking a holistic university student experience*.

In leading the development and implementation of this *Academic Plan*, the Vice-President (Academic and Research) worked with other STU leaders to ensure integration of the *Academic Plan* with each of the other plans identified in the University's Strategic Plan, namely: the *Strategic Research Plan*; the *Strategic Enrolment Management Plan*; the *Advancement Fundraising and Alumni Engagement Plan*; the *Human Resources and Well-being Plan*; the *Campus Facilities Plan*; the *Communication, Brand, and Marketing Plan*; the *Financial Sustainability Plan*; and the *St. Thomas University Climate and Sustainability Action Plan*. Only by working together, will we fulfill the University's mission in service of our students, faculty, staff, alumni, and society as a whole.

## MISSION STATEMENT

St. Thomas University prioritizes teaching and learning so that each student is prepared for personal and career fulfillment. Through leading programs informed by our humanistic approach and opportunities for experiential education, we offer a robust and inclusive learning community that fosters connections across academic disciplines and emerging scholarly areas. On our beautiful campus, supportive faculty and staff create the ideal place for discovery and possibility. Each St. Thomas student is empowered to think independently, communicate effectively, and act responsibly. Meaningful contributions to the communities we serve—locally, nationally, and globally—are made today, through our teaching and research, and tomorrow, through the success of our alumni.

## VISION

St. Thomas University commits to become the leading choice for students seeking a holistic university student experience.

## POSITION OF THE ACADEMIC PLAN WITHIN ST. THOMAS UNIVERSITY'S STRATEGIC PLAN (2025–30)

GOAL #1 of the University's Strategic Plan: Offer students a distinctive future-focused, transformative education through high standards of excellence in teaching, learning, and research.

STRATEGY #2 under Goal #1 refers to the development of an Academic Plan:

*Expand and renew the academic curriculum through the development of a new University Academic Plan that enhances STU's commitment to excellence in teaching and research.*

## PROCESS FOR DEVELOPING AN ACADEMIC PLAN FOR ST. THOMAS UNIVERSITY (2025–30)

The VPAR and Deans held multiple meetings with the Chairs and Directors of Academic Departments to collaboratively develop the Academic Plan. At each meeting, we discussed initiatives to include in the Plan, strategies to accomplish our goals, measurable outcomes, areas of responsibilities, timelines for completion, and reporting structures. Between meetings, the VPAR and Deans prepared drafts of the Plan, which were circulated to Chairs and Directors with an invitation to consult with departmental colleagues and provide additional feedback. As the process unfolded, Subject Area Coordinators and all other faculty members were invited to provide feedback, and revisions were made after each round of feedback. Finally, the *Academic Plan* was approved by the St. Thomas University Senate on June 19, 2025.

## ACADEMIC STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

### 1 Create new mechanisms for accomplishing the goals and strategies contained within the Academic Strategic Plan.

#### STRATEGIES

**1.1** The VPAR will create a Working Group on Academic Structure (membership to be determined) to perform the tasks assigned to the group under the Academic Plan, which relate to the academic structure of the University.

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**1.2** The VPAR will create a Working Group on Academic Programming (membership to be determined) to perform the tasks assigned to the group under the Academic Plan, which relate to academic programming within the University.

*Primary responsibility: VPAR*

*Timeline: Year 1*

*Outcome: Working groups are established.*

### 2 Optimize use of limited resources by reducing under-enrolled and redundant courses, and adding new courses that will attract more students.

#### STRATEGIES

**2.1** We will use market research provided by Academica to inform key priority areas for new programming and develop a report of current trends.

*Primary responsibility: VPAR and Deans*

*Timeline: Year 1*

*Outcome: Reports are produced.*

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**2.2** The Director of Institutional Research (DIR) will provide data to Deans, Department Chairs and Directors, and the VPAR biannually (May and December) on course enrolments within and between departments showing trends over time.

*Primary responsibility: Director of IR*

*Timeline: Year 1*

*Outcome: Reports are produced.*

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- 2.3** The Enrolment Management team will provide suggestions to the Deans, Department Chairs and Directors, and the VPAR biannually (May and December) of new courses and that may attract new students based on Admission Counselors' feedback from recruitment fairs.

*Primary responsibility: Associate Vice-President (Enrolment Management)*

*Timeline: Year 1*

*Outcome: Reports are produced.*

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- 2.4** Each academic department will complete a review of current course offerings to ensure optimal use of limited resources, and report to the Dean and VPAR biannually (May and December) their plans for creating new courses and retiring courses or cutting sections that are no longer needed.

*Primary responsibility: Academic Departments*

*Timeline: Year 1*

*Outcome: Plans are produced.*

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- 2.5** Academic departments will submit new course proposals to the Senate Curriculum Committee for approval, in accordance with the plan they submitted to the Dean and VPAR.

*Primary responsibility: Academic Departments*

*Timeline: Year 1-2 (and ongoing)*

*Outcome: Number of new courses submitted to SCC.*

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- 2.6** Academic departments will submit proposals to the Senate Curriculum Committee to retire courses that are no longer needed, in accordance with the plan they submitted to the Dean and VPAR.

*Primary responsibility: Academic Departments*

*Timeline: Year 1-2 (and ongoing)*

*Outcome: Number of course retirements submitted to SCC.*

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- 2.7** The Working Group on Academic Programming will review current offerings, identify courses that seem to be redundant (e.g., multiple departments offering the same course, such as statistics), and propose a mechanism to reduce redundancies and ensure equity in the delivery of the course.

*Primary responsibility: Working Group on Academic Programming*

*Timeline: Year 1*

*Outcome: Fewer courses with same content offered across disciplines; more shared and cross-listed courses across departments.*

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- 2.8** Working Group on Academic Structure will consider changes to current course distribution requirements and explore the idea of core courses that could be mandatory for undergraduate students to ensure a well-rounded liberal arts education while increasing enrollment in departments that are currently under-enrolled.

*Primary responsibility: Working Group on Academic Structure*

*Timeline: Year 1-2 (and ongoing)*

*Outcome: Changes to core course requirements; increased enrollment in under-enrolled departments.*

### **3 Ensure course titles and program names resonate with prospective and current students to increase recruitment success by reviewing current course titles and program names, and making changes in alignment with internal advice and external trends.**

#### **STRATEGIES**

- 3.1** The Enrolment Management team will provide suggestions biannually (May and December) to Deans, Department Chairs and Directors, and the VPAR on course titles and program names that could be changed to make them more relatable/ appealing to potential and current students.

*Primary responsibility: Associate Vice-President of Enrolment Management*

*Timeline: Year 1*

*Outcome: Reports are produced.*

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- 3.2** Each academic department will review potential changes to program names and propose changes to Deans. After feedback from Deans, Department Chairs will submit proposed changes to Senate Academic Planning Committee (for majors with MPHEC approval) or Interdisciplinary Studies Committee (for Interdisciplinary Studies majors).

*Primary responsibility: Academic Departments*

*Timeline: Year 1-2 (and ongoing)*

*Outcome: Number of program name changes submitted.*

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- 3.3** Each academic department will review changes to current course titles, as suggested by the Enrolment Management team, and propose changes to Deans. After feedback from Deans, Department Chairs will submit proposed changes to course titles to Senate Curriculum Committee.

*Primary responsibility: Academic Departments*

*Timeline: Year 1-2 (and ongoing)*

*Outcome: Number of course name changes submitted.*

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- 3.4** Each academic department will develop an explanation of their program and course offerings to reduce any confusion at the graduate level and to assist the Office of Communications and the Office of Recruitment with current explanations of what we offer students. This information will be used on our website and by the recruiters and other staff in their interactions with prospective students.

*Primary responsibility: Academic Departments*

*Timeline: Year 1-2 (and ongoing)*

*Outcome: Explanations are provided*

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- 3.5** Director of Institutional Research will continue to monitor the success of programs and courses in attracting students and produce an annual report, which will be circulated to the VPAR, Deans, and academic departments.

*Primary responsibility: Director of Institutional Research*

*Timeline: Annually, beginning in Year 1*

*Outcome: Annual reports are produced.*

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## **4** Create new interdisciplinary majors that will attract and retain students.

### **STRATEGIES**

- 4.1** The Working Group on Academic Programming will work with the Chair of the Interdisciplinary Studies Committee, Academic Department Chairs, and Deans to create an inventory of all new interdisciplinary programs currently under development and will develop a report on the current status and timelines for milestones in further development.

*Primary responsibility: Working Group on Academic Programming*

*Timeline: Year 1*

*Outcome: Report is produced.*

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- 4.2** The Working Group on Academic Programming, in consultation with the AVP Enrolment Management, Deans, and Academic Department Chairs will develop proposals for creating new interdisciplinary majors that will attract and retain students while boosting enrolment across all programs.

*Primary responsibility: Working Group on Academic Programming*

*Timeline: Year 1-2*

*Outcome: New Interdisciplinary Majors are proposed.*

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- 4.3** The Working Group on Academic Programming will identify themes, or subjects that are taught across several programs, and explore the possibility of creating programs or concentrations that are theme-based rather than discipline-based.

*Primary responsibility: Working Group on Academic Programming*

*Timeline: Year 2-3*

*Outcome: New theme-based programs/concentrations are produced.*

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## Create new co-curricular certificates and micro-credentials that will appeal to current students and/or attract new part-time students who are not interested in pursuing a full degree.

### STRATEGIES

- 5.1** The Registrar will conduct an inventory of existing certificates to evaluate adherence to new MPHEC requirements, obstacles to completion, and ways to improve student advising with respect to completion of certificate requirements. The Registrar will prepare a report for the Deans who will work with academic departments, the Office of Communications, and the Office of Recruitment to update requirements, completion rates, and marketing.

*Primary responsibility: Registrar*

*Timeline: Year 1*

*Outcome: Inventory is produced and updates are completed.*

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- 5.2** The Working Group on Academic Structure will develop a mechanism for creating new micro-credentials and certificates that will attract and retain students.

*Primary responsibility: Working Group on Academic Structure*

*Timeline: Year 2*

*Outcome: Mechanism is created.*

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- 5.3** After the Working Group on Academic Structure develops a method for creating new micro-credentials and certificates, then academic departments and the Working Group on Academic Programming will develop and implement ideas for new micro-credentials and certificates that align with STU's areas of strength.

*Primary responsibility: Academic Departments and Working Group on Academic Programming*

*Timeline: Year 2-3*

*Outcome: New micro-credentials and certificates are developed.*

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- 5.4** The Advisory Committee on Remote/Online Teaching, chaired by the Dean of Humanities, will develop a proposal for more flexible learning options to increase part-time enrolment and life-long learners, and liaise with the Working Group on Academic Structure to make recommendations to the VPAR and Senate.

*Primary responsibility: Advisory Committee on Remote/Online Teaching*

*Timeline: Year 2-4*

*Outcome: More flexible, online learning options are available for students, including part-time and non-degree.*



## 6

## Increase opportunities for students to expand learning beyond the classroom, develop employment skills, and explore areas of focus including career development and community engagement.

### STRATEGIES

- 6.1** The Advisory Committee on Experiential Learning (chaired by the Dean of Social Sciences and comprised of the Director of Experiential Learning, Future Wabanaki Coordinator, Registrar, Director of Student Services, Internships Coordinator, two faculty members, and two student representatives) will develop formal terms of reference (TOR) and work to identify priority areas for experiential learning at STU.

*Primary responsibility: Advisory Committee on Experiential Learning*

*Timeline: Year 1*

*Outcome: TOR are established and priority areas are identified.*

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- 6.2** The Advisory Committee on Experiential Learning will work with academic departments to complete an inventory of existing course-based internships.

*Primary responsibility: Advisory Committee on Experiential Learning and Academic Departments*

*Timeline: Year 1 (and updated annually)*

*Outcome: Inventory is created (and annually updated).*

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- 6.3** Academic departments will develop ideas for new course-based internships in connection with the Director of Experiential Learning and the Experiential Learning Office to ensure students are placed in appropriate workplaces with discipline-specific learning outcomes.

*Primary responsibility: Academic departments*

*Timeline: Year 1 and ongoing*

*Outcome: New course-based internships are established.*

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- 6.4** The Director of Experiential Learning and the Career Advisor will develop a plan to expand existing career skills workshops to ensure all students are better prepared for success in the workplace and equipped to market the skills they develop at STU (critical thinking, reading, writing), with a timeline for implementation of new workshops.

*Primary responsibility: Director of Experiential Learning and Career Advisor*

*Timeline: Year 1-2*

*Outcome: Plan is created and new workshops are created.*

## 7 Create new learning communities following the “Aquinas” model to increase engagement and foster better connections with classmates and professors.

### STRATEGIES

- 7.1** The Working Group on Academic Structure will develop recommendations for establishing learning communities where students take multiple courses together and perhaps undertake other shared academic and community experiences, such as travel study, special events, guest lectures, additional education opportunities, or living in the same residence wing.

*Primary responsibility: Working Group on Academic Structure*

*Timeline: Year 1-2*

*Outcome: More learning communities are created.*

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- 7.2** Individual academic departments may also connect with other departments to create learning communities where there is mutual interest and connections.

*Primary responsibility: Academic departments*

*Timeline: Year 1-2*

*Outcome: More learning communities are created.*

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## 8 Foster an improved understanding and awareness of Indigenous context and perspectives within the Atlantic region.

### STRATEGIES

- 8.1** Each academic department/program/school will create an inventory of all courses with Indigenous content and submit it to the VPAR.

*Primary responsibility: Academic departments*

*Timeline: Year 1*

*Outcome: Inventories are produced.*

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- 8.2** The VPAR will liaise with the VP (Advancement) and Director of Indigenous Initiatives to secure grant funding to hire Indigenous academics as consultants to review curriculum and make recommendations for changes.

*Primary responsibility: VPAR, VP (Advancement and Alumni Relations), Director of Indigenous Initiatives*

*Timeline: Year 1-2*

*Outcome: Funding is secured; consultants are hired and recommendations are produced.*

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- 8.3** Based on the recommendations from Indigenous academic(s), the Senate Committee on Reconciliation will develop a plan for increasing exposure to accurate Indigenous content for students, faculty, and staff.

*Primary responsibility: Senate Committee on Reconciliation*

*Timeline: Year 2*

*Outcome: Recommendations from consultants are implemented.*

## **9 Enrich students' educational experience by increasing Travel Study opportunities.**

### **STRATEGIES**

- 9.1** The St. Thomas University International Education Committee (chaired by the Dean of Humanities) will develop an inventory of all existing Travel Study programs at STU, and will work with faculty to develop a timeline for when each program will be offered.

*Primary responsibility: International Education Committee*

*Timeline: Year 1*

*Outcome: Inventory is created.*

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- 9.2** The International Education Committee and academic departments will work together to develop new Travel Study programs.

*Primary responsibility: International Education Committee and Academic departments*

*Timeline: Year 2-3*

*Outcome: New Travel Study programs are created.*

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- 9.3** To increase the number of students participating in Travel Study, the VPAR will liaise with the VP (Advancement) to seek donor funding to support students who would not otherwise be able to afford to participate in Travel Study opportunities.

*Primary responsibility: VPAR and VP (Advancement and Alumni Relations)*

*Timeline: Year 2*

*Outcome: New funding is secured.*

## 10 Update classrooms and other learning environments to ensure they are sufficiently equipped to meet academic learning goals.

### STRATEGIES

- 10.1** Working with the Director of Facilities Management, the Senate Campus Planning Committee and the Learning and Teaching Development (LTD) Committee will evaluate classroom environment, and make recommendations to the VPAR and President for modifications.

*Primary responsibility: Director of Facilities Management, Senate Campus Planning Committee, and LTD Committee*

*Timeline: Year 1 and ongoing*

*Outcome: Recommendations are made.*

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- 10.2** The President's Advisory Committee on Information Technology (co-chaired by the Vice-President Finance and VPAR) will evaluate classroom technology, and make recommendations to the President for modifications.

*Primary responsibility: VP (Finance and Administration) and VPAR*

*Timeline: Year 1-2*

*Outcome: Recommendations are produced.*

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- 10.3** Subject to financial resources, the President will prioritize recommendations from the Senate Campus Planning Committee, LTD Committee, and President's Advisory Committee on Information Technology and authorize implementation in accordance with principles of fiscal responsibility.

*Primary responsibility: Director of Facilities Management*

*Timeline: Year 1 and ongoing*

*Outcome: Enhancements are made.*

## **11** Ensure both full-time and part-time faculty members are equipped and supported to deliver a high-quality education to our students.

### **STRATEGIES**

- 11.1** The Registrar will develop a plan for providing department chairs with the names of students who have chosen to major, minor, or honour in their discipline to facilitate better communication between academic departments and their students to increase engagement and quality of students' educational experience.

*Primary responsibility: Registrar*

*Timeline: Year 1 and ongoing*

*Outcome: Plan is developed and implemented.*

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- 11.2** The Senate Learning and Teaching Development (LTD) Committee will review best practices and recommend appropriate professional development support in the area of teaching for all faculty members, including the opportunity to complete a Diploma in University Teaching. Recommendations will go to Senate, the VPAR, and the Deans for approval, as appropriate.

*Primary responsibility: LTD Committee*

*Timeline: Year 1-2*

*Outcome: Recommendations are produced and implemented.*

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- 11.3** The Senate Learning and Teaching Development Committee (LTD) along with the Deans will explore the feasibility of establishing a Centre for Learning and Teaching Development at STU and make recommendations to the VPAR.

*Primary responsibility: LTD Committee and Deans*

*Timeline: Year 2*

*Outcome: Recommendations are produced.*

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- 11.4** The VPAR will liaise with the VP (Advancement) to seek donor funding to establish a Centre for Learning and Teaching Development at STU.

*Primary responsibility: VPAR*

*Timeline: Year 2 and ongoing*

*Outcome: Funding is secured.*

## **12** Develop new external partnerships to enhance the academic mission, including recruitment and retention.

- 12.1** The Working Group on Academic Programming will work with the VPAR, Deans, and academic departments to develop an inventory of existing partnerships and assess how they are working.

*Primary responsibility: Working Group on Academic Programming*

*Timeline: Year 1-2*

*Outcome: Inventory and assessment are produced.*

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- 12.2** The Working Group on Academic Programming will work with the VPAR, Deans, and academic departments to develop new external partnerships and engage with the community beyond our campus.

*Primary responsibility: VPAR*

*Timeline: Year 2 (and ongoing)*

*Outcome: New partnerships are produced.*

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## **13** Encourage appropriate academic rigour.

- 13.1** The Director of Institutional Research will provide data to Deans, Department Chairs and Directors, and the VPAR on trends in average GPA over time. Where possible, data for specific courses, departments, and programs will be provided (while respecting confidentiality of instructors).

*Primary responsibility: Director of Institutional Research*

*Timeline: Year 1*

*Outcome: Reports are produced.*

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- 13.2** The Working Group on Academic Structure will research best practices and make recommendations to the VPAR to ensure appropriate academic rigour. The Director of Institutional Research will provide data on grade differentials and other information as needed to assist the committee in its work.

*Primary responsibility: Working Group on Academic Structure*

*Timeline: Year 2*

*Outcome: Recommendations are submitted to the VPAR.*

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- 13.3** The Working Group on Academic Structure will consider and recommend changes to the criteria for inclusion on the Dean's List, graduation with "distinction", and other areas of academic recognition as determined by the working group to be appropriate for review.

*Primary responsibility: Working Group on Academic Structure*

*Timeline: Year 2*

*Outcome: Recommendations are submitted to the Senate Admissions and Academic Standing Committee and then Senate for final approval.*

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- 13.4** The Working Group on Academic Structure will consider standard conversions between percentage grades and letter grades across the University, and make recommendations to Senate.

*Primary responsibility: Working Group on Academic Structure*

*Timeline: Year 1*

*Outcome: Recommendation is submitted to Senate.*

## **14 Strengthen academic programs by connecting interdisciplinary programs with an academic department and fostering greater collaboration among departments.**

### **STRATEGIES**

- 14.1** The Working Group on Academic Structure will propose changes to the academic structure to better support interdisciplinary programs through enhanced collaboration with academic departments.

*Primary responsibility: Working Group on Academic Structure*

*Timeline: Year 2*

*Outcome: Academic structure is changed to provide better support for interdisciplinary programs.*

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- 14.2** The Working Group on Academic Structure will facilitate discussions among academic departments to arrive at recommendations for enhanced collaboration, which may include restructuring current departmental groupings (i.e., Humanities and Social Sciences) and/or consolidation of departments, where deemed mutually beneficial.

*Primary responsibility: Working Group on Academic Structure*

*Timeline: Year 2-3*

*Outcome: Recommendations are produced.*

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- 14.3** The Interdisciplinary Studies committee will review our current offerings, and ensure the Calendar website is accurate regarding interdisciplinary offerings that each interdisciplinary program, including minors, has an identified point person.

*Primary responsibility: Interdisciplinary Studies Committee*

*Timeline: Year 1-2*

*Outcome: Calendar website update is completed; each Interdisciplinary program has an identified point person on the STU website.*

- 15 Each academic department and Working Group (on Academic Structure and Academic Programming) will submit a progress report to the VPAR once per semester in December and May using the reporting template provided by the VPAR.**

*Primary responsibility: Academic Departments, Working Group on Academic Programming, Working Group on Academic Structure*

*Timeline: Biannually*

*Outcome: Reports are submitted.*