

SSU 2027

ANCHORED WITH WINGS

The Strategic Plan of St. Stephen's University | Waypoints on the next three years of our pilgrimage.



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St. Stephen's University is located on the homeland of the Peskotomuhkati (Passamaquoddy) people. We are grateful for their welcome and friendship, and we are always seeking ways in which we can develop our relationship in mutually respectful ways, including our conversations with Chief Hugh Akagi and others about our Reconciliation Studies program. It is a privilege that we are able to locate some of our program on the Peskotomuhkati Nation's Camp Chiputneticook (15 minutes north of St. Stephen's University).

We respect the intentions of the Treaties of Peace and Friendship, while acknowledging the many ways in which governments and others have failed to honour their part of those agreements. It is our desire to live up to the responsibility of being "treaty relatives."

PREAMBLE

St. Stephen's University is entering a new era as a graduate school of theology, peace and reconciliation, refocusing on our graduate certificates and master's degree programs. As with any transition, a period of reflection and planning is needed to devise the means that are suited to the ends we wish to achieve. This process needs to be completed with sensitivity, creativity, and the coordination of the many moving parts that make up the whole. With gratitude to our past, we remain anchored to our core values of *justice, beauty, and compassion* through academic, personal, and spiritual formation.

SSU's Office of the President produced the strategic plan that you are about to read in consultation with the Strategic Plan Working Group that was assembled from members of the Board of Governors and external invitees in the fall of 2023 after our undergraduate programs were suspended. We have called this strategic plan 'Anchored with Wings' to reflect our desire to honour our rich past that brought us to the present and opportunities for taking flight into a meaningful and vibrant future.

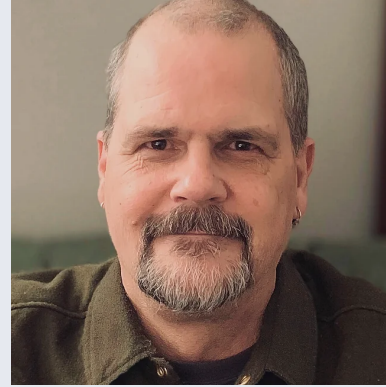
This strategic plan contains five priorities that are divided into a total of twenty-two goals all of which are waypoints on the reimagined and recharted pilgrimage route ahead of us. We invite friends and partners to consider how you can support SSU as we embark on this path.

QUESTIONS? — ssu.ca/contact

GIVE TO SSU — ssu.ca/donate

WELCOME *to* SSU

On behalf of our faculty, staff, and student body, it is my privilege to extend warm greetings to supportive friends of St. Stephen's University. As the incoming Principal, I feel honoured to introduce this new stage in SSU's pilgrimage. Our motto, "*Anchored with Wings*," expresses how each program explores the ancient depths and soaring heights of our community's signature values — justice, beauty, and compassion.



At SSU, we are bridging people and breaking down barriers to cultivate hope and trust with a beautiful gospel of inclusivity committed to the restoration of all things.

SSU is a graduate studies learning community comprised of three schools that each bring this mandate to life in unique ways.

THE SSU SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY & CULTURE | THE JIM FOREST INSTITUTE FOR RELIGION, PEACE & JUSTICE | THE CENTRE FOR RECONCILIATION STUDIES

- *In our School of Theology & Culture, we gather cohorts that bridge our polarized culture, transcending the us-them hostilities of spectrum ideology and theological divisiveness with lives of self-giving love.*
- *In the Jim Forest Institute, we gather and equip aspiring activists and everyday peacemakers of diverse faith(s) who long to build bridges of peace and justice amid local and global conflicts.*
- *In the Centre for Reconciliation Studies, we desire to walk together with Indigenous partners over bridges of mutual understanding and dialogue into a future hope of our connectedness to creation and to one another.*

Across all programs, we are an academic and contemplative community where the "unwelcomed" can belong, experience healing, and become bridging agents of reconciliation in the world.



Dr. Bradley Jersak

PRINCIPLE of ST. STEPHEN'S UNIVERSITY

MISSION & PURPOSE



The Mission of St. Stephen's University is to prepare people, through academic, personal, and spiritual development, for a life of justice, beauty, and compassion, enabling a humble, creative engagement with their world.

At St. Stephen's University, our purpose is to serve students with opportunities for academic excellence, creative and integrated thinking, spiritual formation, and global exposure, with the flexibility to earn a degree while remaining faithful to their family and career obligations.

With our emphasis on whole-person transformation and integrative thinking, we focus on equipping students to better serve their communities — personally, professionally, and publicly. As a result, our cohorts are comprised of a broad range of learners from across the world, including recent college graduates, experienced ministers, therapists and spiritual directors, peacebuilders and activists, advocates for the oppressed and marginalized, contemplatives, educators and business leaders, and even several retirees.

Courses are led by seasoned scholars and practitioners in their fields who offer a high level of direct engagement as companions in our students' development. We honour our various disciplines by offering students the best sources and lessons possible, including 'brave space' exposure to a variety of theological and cultural perspectives, identified for conversation and analysis.

'Brave space' means that we enter uncomfortable and unavoidable conversations — bravely — providing space to deconstruct and process whatever surfaces in healthy ways, whether with the professor, a spiritual director, or fellow students.

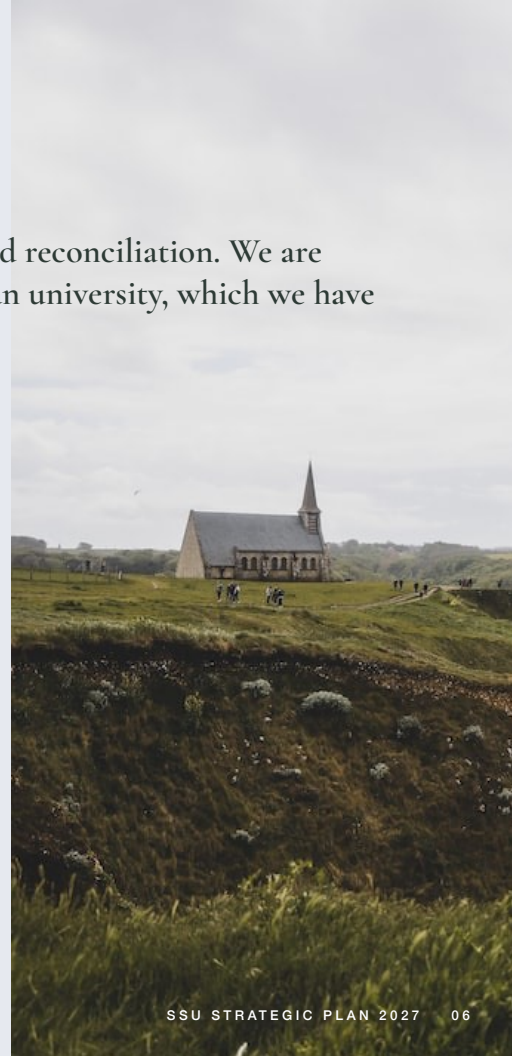
FAITH IDENTITY

St. Stephen's University is a graduate school of theology, peace and reconciliation. We are chartered by the Province of New Brunswick as a private Christian university, which we have interpreted through our shared vision:

"Engaging and reconciling communities through a relational, contemplative, and transformative university education."

We aspire to practice our faith identity in alignment with our [Mission's](#) values of justice, beauty, and compassion, rather than denominational categories or doctrinal conformity. Our faculty, staff and students express these values with conviction and freedom, inclusion and generosity. We aspire to challenge colonizing and exclusionary bounds of Christendom and set an open table where all are welcome.

- The SSU School of Theology & Culture is *faith-based* in the historic 'Jesus Way' gospel tradition of God's self-giving love.
- The Jim Forest Institute for Religion, Peace & Justice is *faith-engaged* in our theological exploration of peace and justice, the inner transformation of a peacemaker, and multi-faith conversations and interreligious peacebuilding.
- The Centre for Reconciliation Studies is *faith-affirming* of First Nations spiritual values and traditions, gifts of the Creator, and all our relations.



PRIORITY 1

ENSURE FINANCIAL VIABILITY AND SUSTAINABILITY

Serving our students and wider community of friends and supporters is why SSU exists, but this is not possible unless the University is financially stable and has the breathing room to offer our unique programs, execute our much-needed mission and purpose in an increasingly polarized world, and ensure that the needs of our faculty and staff are taken care of in terms of compensation, resources, and support without the stress and burden of financial uncertainty. SSU therefore has a plan to increase revenue even as we increase expenditures that will position us well to carry out our mission, purpose, and vision in a sustainable manner by avoiding the pitfalls of “infinite growth” models that have proven to be unpredictable and at times disastrous for other institutions of higher learning similar to SSU.



GOALS

- 1.1 — Increase student enrollment to 75 FTE students by the 2026/27 academic year.
- 1.2 — Increase donor base and amount of annual donations to \$220,000 by the 2026/27 academic year.
- 1.3 — Maintain a competitive course and program fee structure.
- 1.4 — Grow our endowment fund.



GOAL 1.1

Increase student enrollment to 75 FTE students by the 2026/27 academic year.

- From our current 50 FTE students and 100 total students, incrementally increase student enrolment each year until we reach 75 FTE students in 2026/27.
- Hire a full time Director of Marketing and Recruitment to address gaps in our procedures and infrastructure that will allow for efficient lead capture of student inquiries through software upgrades and CRM integration.
- Enhance our advertising as shaped by a new strategic marketing plan that focuses on student recruitment, including social media ads, podcast ads, regular email blasts, and an annual newsletter.
- Create new student pipelines through strategic partnerships with organizations, churches, and other institutions of higher education to generate "passive" student recruitment.



GOAL 1.2

Increase donor base and amount of annual donations to \$220,000 by the 2026/27 academic year.

Tap into SSU's large and engaged network to consult advancement experts, establish a fundraising and advancement committee, build partnerships and relationships, develop appealing pitches, and create effective fundraising campaigns.

Increase SSU's *annual* donations from \$75,000 in the current 2023/24 academic year to \$150,000 in 2024/25, \$180,000 in 2025/26, and \$220,000 in 2026/27.

Create a more sustainable ratio of 80:20 between tuition and donations to help SSU decrease our reliance on tuition revenue.





GOAL 1.3

Maintain a competitive course and program fee structure.

- As a private non-profit institution of higher education with no government funding or denominational support, SSU will maintain the current levels of tuition at \$395 CAD per credit hour and \$200 CAD in student fees per semester to balance affordability and revenue that supports our operations.
- Ensure that finances are not a barrier to an SSU education by offering generous scholarships and bursaries (including matching) and percentage bursaries that are tied to what a prospective student can afford.



GOAL 1.4

Grow our endowment fund.

Add an extra layer of financial security, and position SSU to offer endowed professorships and other initiatives through the investment of an endowment that we establish through the Fundy Community Foundation.

Grow SSU's endowment to \$100,000 by the end of the 2026/27 fiscal year.



PRIORITY 2

TAKE CARE OF OUR COMMUNITY

The institutional health of St. Stephen's University should never be taken for granted, as there is always room for improvement if we are to thrive in the future, especially in this new era of hybrid-distance graduate studies and the unique considerations this entails. SSU will therefore enhance the conditions that support, motivate, and encourage the full and enthusiastic participation of our community, including faculty, administration, staff, students, and alumni.



GOALS

- 2.1 — Provide fair financial compensation and employee benefits for faculty and administration.
- 2.2 — Restructure, diversify, and fill new faculty and staff positions at SSU.
- 2.3 — Engage our alumni on a more consistent basis in meaningful ways.



GOAL 2.1

Provide fair financial compensation and employee benefits for faculty, staff, and administration.

- Incrementally increase the salaries of all SSU staff and faculty so they are comparable with the ranked professor salaries and staff salaries of universities in Canada.
- Offer competitive compensation packages to retain SSU's staff and faculty and avoid employee turnover, while attracting high calibre staff and faculty to ensure the exceptional delivery of our programs and our successful operations.
- Explore competitive employee benefit packages that are tailored to the needs of our current and future employees whom SSU would like to retain and attract.



GOAL 2.2

Restructure, diversify, and fill new faculty and staff positions at SSU.

Hire a new Marketing and Recruitment Coordinator, Director of the Centre for Reconciliation Studies, Business Manager, Director of Operations, and Campus Host by 2026/27.

Explore the possibility of hiring one more full-time professor.

Enhance the diversity of voices when filling new positions to ensure underrepresented perspectives are included more.

GOAL 2.3

Engage our alumni on a more consistent basis in meaningful ways.

Engage SSU's alumni, with a stronger and more deliberate focus on the alumni of our graduate programs.

Be more intentional about strengthening our relationships with SSU's alumni by inviting them to support their alma mater with their finances, partnerships, collaborations, and other resources.



PRIORITY 3

STRENGTHEN OUR PROGRAM OFFERINGS

St. Stephen's University fills a unique curricular void with our emphasis on theology, peace and reconciliation. Rather than create and offer new programs in new subject areas, SSU will make targeted improvements to our current programs and strengths by reimagining the use of the courses and curriculum we offer, encouraging greater programmatic flexibility and customization, enhancing the quality of our course delivery, and more intentionally tapping into the needs and interests of our constituents. This might mean expanding our current course offerings in a particular field to create new programs that build off current programs. Further, SSU will tweak and enhance our program offerings by adding courses that scratch where our target student audiences itch and that serve our current and prospective students who are often undergoing faith deconstruction and are attempting to transcend spectrum dualism by becoming bridges in our polarized world.



GOALS

- 3.1 — Establish our Certificate in Reconciliation Studies within a one-year completion time.
- 3.2 — Create and offer a new multifaith chaplaincy and spiritual care course.
- 3.3 — Create a new online BA Foundation Year program.
- 3.4 — Strengthen SSU's current programs by increasing curricular flexibility and enhancing delivery methods.



GOAL 3.1

Establish our Certificate in Reconciliation Studies with a one-year completion time.

- Populate our Certificate program with enough students that they can complete it within one year.
- Strengthen our relationships with our Indigenous neighbours and friends and seek the direction of the Advisory Council to ensure that the program is offered through the leadership of local Indigenous elders, scholars, and knowledge keepers.
- Explore new avenues for partnering with other programs in Indigenous Studies and Reconciliation Studies to potentially offer a full Master of Arts degree.

GOAL 3.2

Create and offer a new multifaith chaplaincy and spiritual care course.

- Serve the growing demand for chaplains who care for the spiritual needs of prisoners, hospital patients, and military personnel in a variety of multifaith settings.



GOAL 3.3

Create a new online BA Foundation Year program.

Combine and offer lower level undergraduate versions of SSU's graduate studies courses to create and market a new online BA Foundation Year for young adults who prefer one more year at home after graduating from high school and do not want to be absorbed into a large, intimidating campus.

GOAL 3.4

Strengthen SSU's current programs by increasing curricular flexibility and enhancing delivery methods.

Develop more course electives for students and provide a framework for offering and monitoring Student-Led Independently-Created Courses (SLICCs).

Move all SSU courses into one feature-rich Learning Management System for a more consistent and seamless student experience.

Explore options for enhancing our library's electronic resources.



PRIORITY 4

FORGE NEW STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS AND EXPAND SSU's REACH

As a small graduate school of non-denominational theology, peace and reconciliation, St. Stephen's University benefits greatly from the collaboration, support, and resources of our friends and partners to complement our strengths. SSU will therefore selectively choose and work with new partners for targeted purposes and objectives that support our operations and delivery of our programs in innovative and flexible ways and improve our financial well-being and sustainability.



GOALS

- 4.1 — Establish new partnerships with institutions of higher education in Canada, the U.S., and the U.K.
- 4.2 — Expand SSU's presence through new extension campuses for residencies on the west coast of Canada and in the U.K.
- 4.3 — Engage and invite the support of churches, church collectives, and ministry organizations.
- 4.4 — Create MOUs with various peace organizations and multifaith communities.
- 4.5 — Build genuine and meaningful relationships with Indigenous communities and organizations.
- 4.6 — Establish local community partnerships for enhancing Park Hall's use and place in the town of St. Stephen.
- 4.7 — Begin a documentary series on the subject of peacemaking through story.
- 4.8 — Establish the new 'St Brigid Research Fellowship Program' on the isles of Iona and Mull.
- 4.9 — Establish an Honourary Board.



GOAL 4.1

Establish new partnerships with institutions of higher education in Canada, the U.S., and the U.K.

- Develop relationships with other academic institutions for the purposes of course articulation, student exchanges, collaborations, and facilitating new student pipelines.

GOAL 4.2

Expand SSU's presence through new extension campuses for residencies on the west coast of Canada and in the U.K.

- Enhance the flexibility, access, and diversity of SSU's residencies by seeking partnerships with organizations such as the Mark Centre in BC and An Cuan in Rostrevor, NI.
- Forge partnerships with organizations and institutions of higher education in BC and the UK whose values align with those of SSU to increase credit and non-credit participation.



GOAL 4.3

Engage and invite the support of churches, church collectives, & ministry organizations.

Add to our current relationships for the purposes of collaboration, new student pipelines, and ministry preparation for staff and members of churches and parachurch organizations.

GOAL 4.4

Create MOUs with various peace organizations and multifaith communities.

Develop relationships such that the Jim Forest Institute becomes the curricular arm of peace and multifaith organizations for the purpose of staff and volunteer training, and for collaborations, new student pipelines, and financial partnerships.





GOAL 4.5

Build genuine and meaningful relationships with Indigenous communities and organizations.

- Invite the leadership and guidance of local Indigenous elders and academics to enhance the offerings of our Centre for Reconciliation Studies and the communities we serve.
- Partner with Indigenous-led academic institutions to improve and expand our Reconciliation Studies program.

GOAL 4.6

Establish local community partnerships for enhancing Park Hall's use and place in the town of St. Stephen.

Reach out to businesses, civic community groups, and local charities to create partnerships that open avenues for SSU to serve our community.

Welcome members of the local community through the doors of Park Hall in various capacities, whether for events, collaborations on initiatives, or space rentals.





GOAL 4.7

Begin a documentary series on the subject of peacemaking through story.

- Partner with filmmakers to develop a documentary series that focuses on empathetic listening across sectarian divides through the use of story to promote peace and reconciliation in various locations around the world.
- Ensure that the documentary series reveals the effectiveness and challenges of peacemaking, contributes to practical peacebuilding, and draws attention to SSU's academic programs.



GOAL 4.8

Establish the 'St Brigid Research Fellowship Program' on the isles of Iona and Mull.

Support research and scholarship on the inner transformation of a peacemaker in a retreat-like setting with partners for housing fellows and disseminating research.

Publish research findings and plan public talks at the Iona Village Hall annually to increase knowledge mobilization.

GOAL 4.9

Establish an Honourary Board.

Compile a wish list of prominent and well-known individuals whose vocations and legacy connect well with our program offerings, mission and purpose, and faith identity.

Assemble an Honourary Board whose networks and influence have the potential to enhance the reputation and increase the visibility of SSU around the world.



PRIORITY 5

INVEST IN PARK HALL AS SSU's ARCHITECTURAL CENTREPIECE

Known affectionately as the 'Big Yellow House,' Park Hall has long been the hub of activity, learning in while living in community with faculty, staff, and students sharing life together, since it was purchased as the Park Hotel in 1976. As SSU shifts our attention to hybrid-distance graduate programs with online courses, travel-study options, and short residentials, we envision Park Hall as an important physical gathering place for our students during these residentials, the home of young adults living together in community, a physical symbol of our presence in the local community of St. Stephen, and as a visual marketing device for attracting students and supporters who desire to participate in the vibrancy of our physical presence in New Brunswick. Park Hall is therefore worth our deliberate attention and investment to signal our belief in the importance of rootedness in a particular location and setting.



GOALS

- 5.1 — Create a vibrant and self-sustaining co-living community in Park Hall.
- 5.2 — Invest in capital upgrades to Park Hall.



GOAL 5.1

Create a vibrant and self-sustaining co-living community in Park Hall.

- Form a new co-living community of mature and independent adults who value learning and personal growth.
- Encourage the formation of a community of a core group of residents, inspired by SSU's mission that centers on "justice, beauty and compassion."
- Invite the participation of residents and community members in various community events such as the School of Contemplation and occasional public speakers and other envisioned events.



GOAL 5.2

Invest in capital upgrades to Park Hall.

Seek designated donations for upgrades to classroom space, the renovation of guest suites, replacement of the roof, renovations to the façade and main entrance, and refurbishment of the previous library to make it more attractive for leasing purposes.





You invest in *people* so we can invest in *people*.

When you invest in SSU's future, our priority is to ensure that our community of staff and faculty are taken care of so that they can in turn invest themselves fully in modelling our core values of justice, beauty, and compassion throughout the wider SSU community, including students, alumni, partners, and friends.

Whereas other institutions of higher education have large overhead in the form of facilities maintenance and operations expenses, a larger portion of your financial support goes directly to the people who make up SSU. This is because we have intentionally designed our hybrid-distance, short residential, and travel-study program delivery models in a way that keeps tuition costs down for our students and operations and facilities expenses to a minimum compared to other private, non-profit universities that do not receive government funding or denominational support.

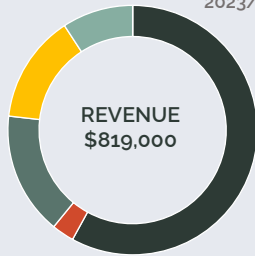
We hope you will join us in investing in SSU's community.

DONATE — ssu.ca/donate

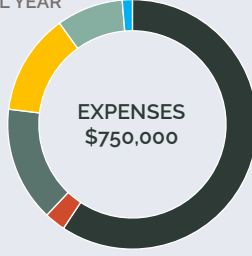


ST. STEPHEN'S UNIVERSITY

2023/24 FISCAL YEAR

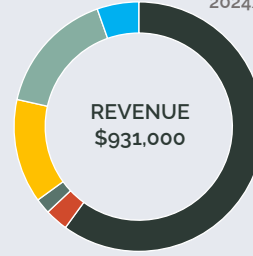


- Tuition – \$475,000 – 58%
- Residencies – \$24,000 – 2.9%
- Travel-Study – \$130,000 – 15.9%
- Facility Rentals – \$115,000 – 14%
- Annual Donations – \$75,000 – 9.2%
- Revenue Carried Over – 0%

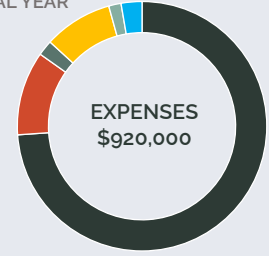


- Payroll – \$475,000 – 63.3%
- Operations – \$82,000 – 11%
- Travel-Study – \$76,000 – 10%
- Facilities – \$82,000 – 11%
- Debt Payments – \$25,000 – 3.3%
- Endowment Contrib. – \$10,000 – 1.4%

2024/25 FISCAL YEAR

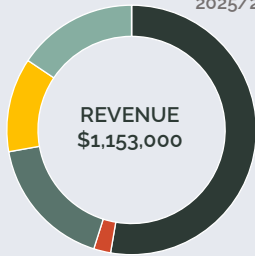


- Tuition – \$557,000 – 60%
- Residencies – \$28,000 – 3%
- Travel-Study – \$20,000 – 2%
- Facility Rentals – \$126,000 – 13.5%
- Annual Donations – \$150,000 – 16.1%
- Revenue Carried Over – \$50,000 – 5.4%

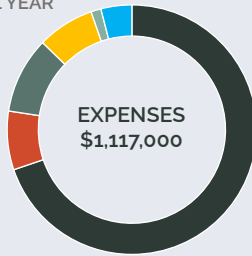


- Payroll – \$680,000 – 73.9%
- Operations – \$100,000 – 10.9%
- Travel-Study – \$18,000 – 2%
- Facilities – \$82,000 – 8.9%
- Debt Payments – \$15,000 – 1.6%
- Endowment Contrib. – \$25,000 – 2.7%

2025/26 FISCAL YEAR

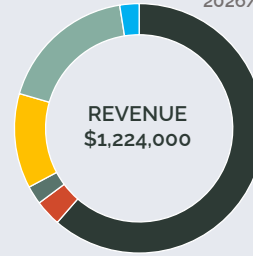


- Tuition – \$608,000 – 52.7%
- Residencies – \$25,000 – 2.2%
- Travel-Study – \$200,000 – 17.3%
- Facility Rentals – \$140,000 – 12.2%
- Annual Donations – \$180,000 – 15.6%
- Revenue Carried Over – 0%

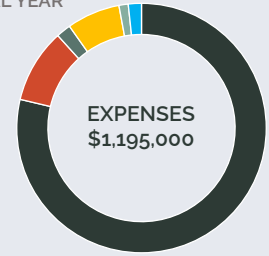


- Payroll – \$780,000 – 69.8%
- Operations – \$85,000 – 7.6%
- Travel-Study – \$110,000 – 9.9%
- Facilities – \$82,000 – 7.4%
- Debt Payments – \$15,000 – 1.3%
- Endowment Contrib. – \$45,000 – 4%

2026/27 FISCAL YEAR



- Tuition – \$752,000 – 61.4%
- Residencies – \$42,000 – 3.4%
- Travel-Study – \$30,000 – 2.4%
- Facility Rentals – \$150,000 – 12.3%
- Annual Donations – \$220,000 – 18%
- Revenue Carried Over – \$30,000 – 2.5%



- Payroll – \$940,000 – 78.7%
- Operations – \$115,000 – 9.6%
- Travel-Study – \$23,000 – 1.9%
- Facilities – \$82,000 – 6.9%
- Debt Payments – \$15,000 – 1.2%
- Endowment Contrib. – \$20,000 – 1.7%

MORE INFORMATION

LEARN MORE ABOUT SSU

MISSION — ssu.ca/mission-and-purpose

FAITH — ssu.ca/faith-identity

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