



St Mark's College
ADELAIDE

Towards our second century: a strategy for St Mark's College

May 2022 – updated May 2024

St Mark's College acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land on which we are situated, the Kurna people, and pay our respects to Elders past and present.

www.stmarkscollege.com.au

St Mark's College, Adelaide

OUR VISION AND VALUES

- *St Mark's College is a vibrant, values-based residential academic community in which university students live, learn, and thrive together, with their all-round education enriched by a range of academic, cultural, sporting, spiritual, and social activities, and community service, and by academic and wellbeing support of a high quality.*
- *St Mark's aspires to offer its students the best university educational experience possible in Australia, and to making it increasingly comparable with the best in the world – a university experience grounded in the pursuit of academic excellence, collegiality, and service.*
- *The following values guide our behaviour and choices in all things: respect, excellence, inclusion, integrity, service, and community.*
- *St Mark's aims:*
 - *to make a profound and positive difference in the lives of its students, providing life-changing opportunities for them,*
 - *to enrich our local, national, and international communities through nurturing leaders for the future who will make a difference for good in the world,*
 - *to contribute significantly to the university sector in South Australia and nationally, including through demonstrating the value of residential collegiate education, and*
 - *to be recognised as Australia's leading university residential college.*

OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

St Mark's College commits to providing life-changing opportunities for students in coming years through focusing on **seven areas of strategic priority**:

1. Actively encouraging **academic excellence** and supporting career preparation
2. Promoting **student wellbeing and belonging** in a safe, respectful, diverse, and inclusive community
3. Working to **support all students who need it, and to promote excellence and diversity**, through a major expansion of scholarships and other financial support for students
4. Developing the **strongest team of staff** who contribute to an exceptional student learning experience
5. Providing **outstanding facilities and services in** an inspiring and sustainable physical environment
6. Developing the **financial resources** needed to achieve these priorities
7. Engaging our alumni and friends in **lifelong connections** and in positioning St Mark's for its second century.

ABOUT THIS STRATEGIC PLAN

Strategic planning and monitoring performance against the strategic plan is an important element of the governance responsibility of the College's Board.

A draft of this strategic plan was prepared by the Board with input from student leaders, staff, and the Foundation Board.

Feedback on the draft strategic plan was invited from all members of the St Mark's community.

Following this feedback, the Board revised the draft, and endorsed this revised strategic plan in May 2022. This strategy was reviewed and updated by the College Board in May 2023, and again in May 2024.

It is envisaged the strategic priorities in this plan will guide our actions for years to come.

In an uncertain world, it is necessary to be agile and flexible in seizing opportunities and responding to challenges. It is therefore intended that the strategic plan, and the operational and budgetary plans and Key Performance Indicators that underpin this strategy, will continue to be reviewed annually.

Strategic Plan

St Mark's College acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land on which we are situated, the Kurna people, and pay respects to Elders past and present.

The College is an Anglican foundation committed to meaningful links with the Anglican Church and supporting students on their spiritual journeys, while welcoming people of all faiths and none, as we have always done.

St Mark's College was founded as an affiliated college of the University of Adelaide, and today admits students studying for degrees or higher qualifications at the University of Adelaide, the University of South Australia, and Flinders University, and greatly values its relationship with those universities.

This strategic plan - *Towards our second century: a strategy for St Mark's College* - builds upon the achievement of the College's almost 100 years of service to local, regional, national, and international communities.

This strategy celebrates and builds upon the best in the College's distinguished heritage. This heritage includes the high academic standards, the commitment to community service and to the acquisition of knowledge that will be put to the service of others, the international outlook, and the aspiration to offer generous scholarships, that were among the hallmarks of the College's foundation.

Like the founders of the College, we are committed to offering students the best educational experience possible in Australia, and to making it increasingly comparable with the best in the world. Like our founders, we aspire to judge our success by the highest international standards.

Indeed, this strategy is about ensuring that St Mark's students today are ready to meet the challenges of a world characterised by global forces and rapid change.

Our strategic thinking will continue to draw on forecasts of trends in the life experiences of young people (such as the opportunities and challenges they face, and their expectations of education, careers, and their broader lives), and in demographic, technological, economic, and other social conditions, including developments in university and other education and in employment.

Underpinning this strategy, and central to all we do, is a strong whole-of-institution commitment to promoting gender equality, respect, diversity, and inclusion.

We believe that the life-changing opportunities which St Mark's provides should be available to talented students regardless of their background, and in particular of their family's means. All students gain from being part of a community of students drawn from diverse backgrounds and pursuing diverse studies and interests. In this and other ways, College life has an invaluable broadening impact for students.

St Mark's has a long tradition of welcoming students from around the world, and of taking a broad international perspective. This has never been more important than it is in today's world.

Becoming a member of St Mark's College as a student means becoming a member of a global community for life. The College is committed to engaging with Old Collegians and friends of the College, and helping alumni and friends connect with each other. We deeply appreciate the support which so many Old Collegians and friends of the College provide to help current and future students at St Mark's.

The College celebrated the 40th anniversary of coeducation in 2022, and we look forward to celebrating the College's centenary in 2025. The Centenary will provide a historic opportunity to connect further and to reconnect with alumni and friends in Australia and around the world, including to secure substantial philanthropic support for the College's second century.

To enable the College to fulfil its aspiration to offer its students the best all-round education in an Australian university, and to make the St Mark's experience available to students of potential regardless of their means, is an ambitious goal. It requires clarity of purpose in our vision and in our execution.

To this end, St Mark's College commits to providing life-changing opportunities for students in coming years through focusing on **seven areas of strategic priority**:

1. Actively encouraging **academic excellence** and supporting career preparation
2. Promoting **student wellbeing and belonging** in a safe, respectful, diverse, and inclusive community
3. Working to **support all students who need it, and to promote excellence and diversity**, through a major expansion of scholarships and other financial support for students
4. Developing the **strongest team of staff** who contribute to an exceptional student learning experience
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7. Engaging our alumni and friends in **lifelong connections** and in positioning St Mark's for its second century.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1: Actively encouraging academic excellence and supporting career preparation

For St Mark's students to thrive in the 21st century, they require an academic environment that supports both their current university studies and their career aspirations. We commit to encouraging academic excellence as well as supporting career preparation for each student at St Mark's in the coming years in a world of continuing change in education and employment, including changes in universities and in student experience. We will support students in their transition to university, along their path through university, and in their transition to employment or further study.

We recognise that our students will make their lives and careers in a 21st century world of global forces and rapid technological and other change. To succeed in this world, they will increasingly need to engage in life-long learning, to be agile (including to take advantage of the opportunities created by technological developments), to be internationally aware, and to be equipped with future-focused skills, including of lateral and innovative thinking, as well as critical and creative thinking and clear communication.

Specifically, we will:

1. Attract and retain the best undergraduate and postgraduate students from diverse backgrounds in Adelaide, regional South Australia, throughout Australia, and from around the world

2. Uphold a culture of academic excellence that promotes clear academic goals and improvement, and a strong work ethic, helping students to fulfil their potential
3. Alongside our tutorial programme, provide first-rate academic and career mentoring for students
4. Build a strong programme of visiting academics
5. Further strengthen programmes to help students develop their leadership and other key life and career skills, including skills of innovation and commitment to life-long learning, and international awareness
6. Encourage students to explore the wide variety of extra-curricular activities available to them, including cultural, sporting and community service activities
7. Strengthen links with universities
8. Develop links with employers that help create pathways to employment for our students.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2: Promoting student wellbeing and belonging in a safe, respectful, diverse, and inclusive community

The benefits to students of living and learning together in a *community* with other students of diverse backgrounds and disciplines have perhaps never been more important.

In a world where young adults face many challenges requiring strength of character and personal resilience, it is important that the College promotes student wellbeing, including through assisting students in developing their character and personal skills, including of resilience, and supporting them through the ups and downs of university life and young adulthood. This includes helping students develop the capacity to thrive after they are away from the support structures of the College.

We are strongly committed to providing a safe, respectful, diverse, and inclusive College environment, and to promoting gender equality. This is at the heart of the values for which we stand. It also supports students to perform at their best, both academically as well as in their interactions with each other and the wider community. We are committed to ensuring such an environment for all members of the College community.

Specifically, we will:

1. Proactively promote the wellbeing of students and their understanding of wellbeing such that it strengthens their character and resilience
2. Uphold our values of respect, excellence, inclusion, integrity, service, and community
3. Strongly promote the College's commitment to community service and good citizenship
4. Support students in their faith, spirituality, and search for meaning
5. Promote awareness of Indigenous cultures and experience, and advance reconciliation
6. Increase the number of Indigenous students in residence and support for them
7. Increase the number of students from other countries in residence and support for them.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3: Working to support all students who need it, and to promote excellence and diversity, through a major expansion of scholarships and other financial support for students

We believe that the great opportunities created by St Mark's should be available to students of potential, regardless of their means. We also believe that all students will benefit from being part of a diverse College community.

Generous scholarships can support students who need financial assistance, and also encourage and reward excellence and help to attract students from diverse backgrounds.

Our aspiration is that any student who earns a place at St Mark's on merit and who cannot otherwise afford to be here would be enabled through scholarships or other financial support to do so.

To enable this requires a very substantial scholarship programme, and a very substantial endowment to fund them.

Taking inspiration from the generosity and pioneering spirit of the College's early leaders and supporters, we therefore seek philanthropic gifts, particularly in the form of scholarships, of a magnitude that can transform the lives of students, and the College as a whole.

Specifically, we will work to:

1. Build a very large endowment of scholarships to support all students who need financial assistance to be at St Mark's, and to promote excellence and diversity
2. Increase the number and scale of gifts arising from Annual Giving, major gifts, and bequests
3. Engender an ever-stronger culture of giving in current students and staff, as well as alumni and friends.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 4: Developing the strongest team of staff who contribute to an exceptional all-round student learning experience

The quality of what a college can do for students is significantly determined by the quality of its staff as well as other resources.

To ensure that our students have the best all-round experience in an Australian university, we commit to having the staff capacity to ensure that St Mark's is an outstanding residential academic community, and to position it for its second century.

Our staff team work in partnership with the College's governance body (the Board), student leaders, and alumni and friends of the College, including volunteers and donors, to achieve these goals and to implement this Strategic Plan.

Specifically, we will:

1. Attract and retain exceptional staff to provide outstanding support for our students
2. Promote the wellbeing and professional development of members of staff
3. Monitor and address potential or upcoming skills gaps to ensure staff resourcing adequately supports our strategic priorities

4. Perform regular performance reviews with staff which include objective setting for the coming period, and the mapping of professional development opportunities
5. Supplement our staff capacity through engaging other experts and leaders from the wider Australian and international communities, including through our guest speaker and visiting scholars programmes.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 5: Providing outstanding facilities and services in an inspiring and sustainable physical environment

Providing students with the best all-round educational experience possible in Australia includes providing them with a learning and living environment with high-quality facilities and services, including information and communications technology, and in a manner that supports environmental sustainability.

Specifically, we will:

1. Refresh the College's Master Plan, taking account of the College's future building and other space needs
2. Continue to improve our existing student accommodation and services as resources permit
3. Ensure appropriate high-quality technology to support flexible student learning as well as connection with national and international academic communities
4. Commit to sustainable environmental practices in all areas of campus life.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 6: Developing the financial resources needed to achieve these priorities

St Mark's is a not-for-profit organisation which aims to generate an annual cumulative cash surplus (after capital expenditure) to remain financially viable and without borrowings to support operating costs. Through student fees, philanthropic support and endowment income, and conference and other income, it must generate sufficient revenue to cover the cost of offering students a high-quality university collegiate experience, and as much as possible making that collegiate experience available to students from diverse backgrounds regardless of their means.

To ensure that our students have the best all-round experience in an Australian university, we commit to developing the financial resources to position St Mark's for its second century.

Specifically, we will:

1. Work to ensure student occupancy at capacity during the academic year
2. Secure new conference and event business to ensure optimal usage of College facilities during the non-academic year
3. Maximise philanthropic support for our students
4. Maintain sound financial management and reporting
5. Explore the provision of new income-generating activities
6. Implement strategies to manage risk.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 7: Engaging our alumni and friends in lifelong connections and in positioning St Mark's for its second century

St Mark's is an intergenerational community of current students together with Old Collegians and friends of the College. Being a member of St Mark's College means being a member of this lifelong community, enriched in so many cases by enduring friendships made at St Mark's.

The College is keen to support Old Collegians and friends of the College in staying connected with the College and with each other.

Many Old Collegians and friends of the College, grateful for what St Mark's has done for them or for others, are committed to doing all they can to pass on these opportunities – even better – to current and future generations of students. They do so through Annual Giving, major gifts, and bequests.

The College's centenary year in 2025 will provide a historic opportunity to connect and reconnect with alumni and friends in Australia and around the world – as well as engaging current students in celebrating the best of our heritage.

That heritage includes so many members of the College fulfilling the founders' vision of a College which promotes the acquisition of knowledge that is used to serve the wider community.

As our forebears did a century ago in founding the College, in marking key landmarks in our history we will work to secure substantial philanthropic support for the College's second century.

Specifically, we will:

1. Work to engage a higher proportion of Old Collegians and friends of the College in College activities, including involving Old Collegians and friends in strategic priorities
2. Connect and reconnect with alumni and friends in Australia and around the world with a range of events to mark the College's Centenary, as well as involving current students
3. Celebrate the best of our heritage, including how the founders' ideal of service and good citizenship has been given effect through successive generations
4. Involve selected alumni and friends in mentoring and internship programmes for our students
5. Seek philanthropic gifts of a magnitude that can transform the lives of students and the College, including as part of the College's Centenary in 2025.