Letter from the President

This past December we received support from the Board of Trustees to move forward to refresh our strategic plan, and we began our process in January 2017. Our goal is to have the new plan approved no later than the February 2018.

We called our plan: SETTING OUR SAILS 2028

One ship drives east and another drives west
With the self-same winds that blow
"Tis the set of sails and not the gales,
That tells them the way to go"
Ella Wheeler Wilcox (1850-1919).

We chose this analogy because it says that we cannot control the winds of change that affect all of us individually, and as a community. What we do control is how we set our sails so we go the direction that we believe best ensures a strong, vibrant future.

This image also reminds us of the voyage that the Sisters of St. Joseph made more than a century ago from France to Louisiana and then to Carondelet, Missouri, and then to St. Paul, Minnesota. Their mission and vision were clear, and sail they did. We engaged more than 600 individuals in focus groups including students, faculty, staff, alumnae, Sisters of St. Joseph, Archbishop Hebda, and 11 corporations and large non-profits. Additionally, 2,350 students, faculty and staff participated in three surveys.

I want to share with you a refreshed Mission statement, a revised Vision statement, and our first statement of Values.

Let’s start with our Mission statement. Our mission statement has always been clear and contained three critical parts. It was about women, it was about excellence in their education based on the liberal arts, and it was about the core beliefs of being a Catholic as lived and articulated by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet.

Our refreshed Mission Statement is:

We educate women to lead and influence.

We educate at all degree levels through valuing and integrating the liberal arts and professional education within the Catholic intellectual tradition, emphasizing scholarly inquiry and social justice teaching as lived by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet.
We welcome a rich diversity of students, with a baccalaureate college for women at the heart of the university and graduate and adult colleges for women and men. Committed to excellence and opportunity, St. Catherine University develops leaders who act with integrity.

The main changes made our headline bolder and a declarative sentence: We educate women to lead and influence.

Does this exclude men? Absolutely not. Men have been in classes on this campus before I was even here, and started to receive degrees from here a long time ago. Men who apply here for our programs need to understand that it is different—women are respected in the classroom, and issues that are discussed will be with a special lens focused on them.

A vision statement is not a 100 years statement. It is a 10-20 year statement. Based on your mission, it asks you—what is the next mountain you want to hike? Where does the mission drive you?

Our revised Vision Statement is:

St. Catherine University is respected globally for educating women who transform the world.

The main change is calling us to examine and reinforce our efforts and actions to bring the globe into every classroom and every discipline. While one can argue the world is boundaryless through technology, and geography does not matter because everyone can be everywhere, this calls for us to educate students so they can understand this in their respective professions, and to have courage to know they have the leadership skills and the educational confidence to transform the situations they find themselves in over time. We already do this at some level, but we do not tell that story enough. And we know there is much more we can do to prepare our students well.

Lastly, our community had never articulated our Values.

Our values drive our behavior, don’t they? Our behavior builds our culture, doesn’t it? And the culture we have among and between ourselves will ultimately determine if we succeed or fail in our mission and whether or not St. Kate’s exists 100 years from now.

I have a favorite phrase—*We judge ourselves by our intent; we judge others by their behavior.*

So when people observe any of us, in our public or personal lives, what do they see in our behavior? What do we say about one another? How do we solve problems? How do we deal with adversity? How do we deal with change? How do we deal with success?
Five values emerged that say best what we stand for. They are not statements of strategy. They are statements of the headlines of how you would know you are with a person associated with St. Kate’s.

**Academic Excellence.**
We embrace a culture of learning that drives the students, faculty and staff to discover, acquire and apply knowledge.

**Community.**
We welcome all without distinction in the spirit of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet.

**Integrity.**
We demonstrate honesty and openness, and build trust with all that we do.

**Social Justice.**
We create an environment of equity, fairness and respect, and we work for systemic change so Earth and all people thrive.

**Reflection.**
We contemplate all life experience and examine the mystery of human purpose.

As you read these, I hope you feel proud to be part of a community that would believe these are important values that we try to live. Do any of us do them perfectly every day? No, we don’t. But they are what we value. They help us build the culture we believe will help us be even stronger in the future.

Our culture will determine more success than the most brilliant plan.

All of us together own the future of St. Kate's. That we exist should not be taken for granted by any person for a minute.

Every decision we make on whether or not to change, on whether or not to change a course so we can make stronger another course, every decision we make is a building block that will either take us forward, or take us down.

It is not a single decision; it is the path of thousands of decisions that happened before us, and the thousands we will make here and now.

We build on the legacy of those before us; and whoever follows us will build on what all of us accomplished together.

WE—that is the only way true success has ever been achieved. I believe it is the most important word in our mission statement.
This is the St. Kate’s I know and love. I hope you see that in your relationship with it too.

We are hard at work building out the plans for the six strategic priorities the Board has determined for our future:

• Build a Strong Foundation
• Strengthen Academic Excellence
• Promote our Story
• Forge Partnerships
• Foster Forever St. Catherine
• Drive a Culture of Innovation and Excellence

We need to pop out the critical investments we need to make, as well as what we would need to change to better align our resources to achieve our mission and our vision.

I hope this gives you a good sense of the work we have ahead of us in the next several months, and how important it is to have a plan that gives us direction, and is simple enough for us to remember and to talk about.