

Students come to Saint Mary's University from all walks and stages of life to pursue their dreams. It is one of the distinctive features of Saint Mary's in which we take the greatest pride.

But in 2003, the average debt load for a Saint Mary's student at graduation was \$22,226. This puts us in the top third of all universities in the country for individual debt. Clearly, many of our students pursue education at almost any cost and then find they have to spend years after graduation paying it off.

This is not how we want to reward our students for choosing Saint Mary's. The first step towards a fulfilling life and a successful career is deciding to come here. We can't have the first step also being the hardest.

Accessibility in its fullest definition has long been a philosophical cornerstone put into practice every day at Saint Mary's University. Despite having the second smallest endowment of all Canadian universities, Saint Mary's University has increased significantly its annual student aid offerings in the last number of years. We are dedicating ourselves to ensuring that those with a passion to learn aren't forced to choose another path solely because of money.

Building our student aid endowment to an acceptable level is – and will remain – a pivotal priority for Saint Mary's now and well into the future. The \$2.5 million in student financial aid raised through this campaign won't represent the end of our pursuit of financial accessibility. But it is a solid step forward as we focus on the heart of the matter: our students.

