

STRATEGIC PLAN

2012-2016



BRIATHAR DÉ MO LÓCHRANN



COLÁISTE MUIRE GAN SMÁL
OLLSCOIL LUIMNIGH

MARY IMMACULATE COLLEGE
UNIVERSITY OF LIMERICK



Mary Immaculate College
STRATEGIC PLAN 2012-2016



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1.0 | foreword

On behalf of the Board of Trustees and the Governing Body of Mary Immaculate College, I am pleased to introduce the College's Strategic Plan 2012-2016.

Throughout the history of this great College, outstanding teaching scholars have shown commitment to their students and to the quality of their learning experience. The College has continuously looked towards the future, striving to develop as an institution and to bring about positive changes aimed at student welfare, well-being and equality. Building on its Mercy tradition, the College's commitment to *making a difference* has, and will remain, a prominent part of its endeavours and those of its graduates, who have contributed greatly to the Irish economy and quality of life at local, national and international levels.

This Strategic Plan marks a new chapter in the life of the College. It recognises the rapid and complex changes to the policy landscape and the operational environment in Ireland.

The lowering of the front wall of the College is a deliberately symbolic gesture of 'opening up' to opportunities to work in partnership with the wider community in terms of social and educational inclusion. A particular focus of the College's Strategic Plan for the future will be continuing to support the Shannon Consortium in bringing about positive change through research, educational initiatives and networking with other stakeholders. This also indicates that the College looks forward to measurable change that is consistent with the objectives set out in the *National Strategy for Higher Education*.

This Strategic Plan will ensure that Mary Immaculate College will continue to grow and flourish with greater international links, while continuing to play a pivotal role in third level education in a more diverse and inclusive Ireland.

Very Reverend Fr Tony Mullins

Chair, Trustees & An Bord Rialaithe



2.0 | President's Introduction

Having taken up the mantle of President of Mary Immaculate College, the ninth person to hold that office in a long tradition of Mercy education in Limerick, I am proud to introduce this Strategic Plan which sets out our agenda for the next five years.

This plan is the product of a very extensive internal and external consultation exercise, undertaken in accordance with the strong spirit of partnership that characterises our endeavours. It strives to meet internally agreed targets as well as responding to national priorities, many of them derived from the *National Strategy for Higher Education*.

Our Strategic Plan involves the active celebration and promotion of the distinctive mission, identity and values of the College as a Catholic institution of Higher Education. We understand the importance of asserting our identity in the current policy context for higher education and within the operational environment we and our partners inhabit. Increasingly we collaborate within strategic clusters where the mission and resources of each provider are integral to joint enterprise and are responsive to the needs of prospective students, served by a menu of provision that is at once coherent and differentiated, and which extends equity of opportunity to all. Our flourishing partnership with the University of Limerick,

Limerick Institute of Technology and IT Tralee, through the Shannon Consortium, is an example of the rich collaboration, enhanced communication and shared delivery practices that such clusters can achieve. In terms of our core mission in teaching, learning and research, we stand at the cusp of a truly remarkable period in our own development, as well as in our collective history. In the current economic environment, third level providers, particularly, are called upon to answer a great challenge and must look beyond current difficulties. As outlined in this Strategic Plan, Mary Immaculate College aims to identify creative solutions that service the increasing demand for third level education and provide for the needs of a socially diverse student populace.

We will be bold in our imagination as we develop programmes, confident as we set about enhancing the quality of our delivery, resolute in the assertion of our distinctive mission and its essential contribution to the continuum of necessary provision and generous in our commitment to partnership so that the best of what we have to offer can be shared and targeted in a strategically coherent way.

In summarising our plan, which has seven pillars, each carrying equal weighting, I offer you a line from the Book of Proverbs: *'Wisdom has built her house, she has set up her seven pillars'* (Proverbs 9:1).

Professor Michael A Hayes

College President

3.0

mission, vision & values

3.1

Mission

Mary Immaculate College, Limerick, founded in 1898, is a third level Catholic College of Education and the Liberal Arts.

The College community promotes excellence in teaching, learning and research at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. It seeks to foster the intellectual, spiritual, personal and professional development of students within a supportive and challenging environment that guarantees the intellectual freedom of staff and students.

In particular, the College seeks to foster in its students a spirit of justice and compassion in the service of others, together with an openness to the religious tradition and values of each individual.

The College promotes a sense of identity enriched by an awareness of its Catholic tradition, the cultures, languages and traditions of Ireland and its special commitment to the Irish language.

Mary Immaculate College respects cultural diversity. It strives to promote equity in society and to provide an environment where all have freedom and opportunity to achieve their full potential.

3.2

Vision

Our vision for Mary Immaculate College in 2016 is for:

“...a distinctive and inclusive, university-level, Catholic College of Education & the Liberal Arts, offering higher level learning opportunities and research of outstanding quality, recognised and appreciated for its essential contribution to the continuum of academic provision in effective and productive collaboration with its partners in the higher education sector, that is embodied by a welcoming and diverse learning community, that presents a beautiful and inviting civic space situated at the heart of Limerick City, and that has made a positive and tangible difference to equity and to the creation of a just society through active promotion of educational inclusion and through the contribution of its excellent graduates.”

3.3

Values

- Academic Freedom
- Community
- Cooperation
- Equality and Diversity
- Ethical conduct
- Excellence
- Fairness
- Fidelity to the Catholic ethos and intellectual tradition
- (The) flourishing life
- Friendliness
- Inclusion
- Integrity
- [The] Irish Language
- Learner-centric
- Partnership
- Pluralism
- Pursuit of Truth
- Quality
- Respect
- Social Justice
- Trust

4.0 |

the character of our institution

Mary Immaculate College is the oldest third level institution in Limerick City. Since its foundation, the College has sustained its commitment to academic excellence and the fostering of critical thought, educational inclusion and innovation in the face of often difficult fiscal and infrastructural circumstances, all the while offering a distinctive ethos and mission informed by the vision of social justice and the emphasis on educational inclusion advanced by Catherine McAuley. This is encapsulated within an institutional Mission Statement that provides continuity with our founding vision whilst enabling the College to welcome and accommodate growth and diversity as the institution faces its future with confidence in a 21st Century context.

Mary Immaculate has an excellent reputation for the calibre of students it attracts and graduates it produces. The College also highly values its reputation as an educational institution of essential strategic importance to the State, producing, inter alia, the highest quality of third level provision for primary level teachers and a significant proportion of all graduates entering the profession, nationally.

In addition to other innovative Education programmes (the first undergraduate degree programmes to be offered in the State in the areas of Education & Psychology and Early Childhood Care & Education), the College's Liberal Arts programme is widely recognised and celebrated, nationally and internationally, for its academic excellence, offering learners the critical and analytical skills so central to the success of the Twenty First Century economy. Here, there are many examples of synergy with the Humanities programme at the University of Limerick where the best strengths of each set of offerings retain their distinctiveness but, where appropriate and where opportunities have been recognised, have been combined strategically, in inter—institutional delivery strategies that provide additional choice for the learner and greater scope for mobility and progression between campuses.

As a critical measure of the institutional distinctiveness of Mary Immaculate – and the qualities of provision demanded by third level learners – the academic programme at the College is not wholly led by the demands of the economy or current public policy but remains a function of the emphasis put by this institution on imparting to its students that which is necessary for a flourishing life. Educational participation must offer the skills necessary for the labour market but must also extend equity of opportunity to people at all stages within the life-cycle, with the full range of motivations for learning, including for its own sake.

The premise behind an educational experience at Mary Immaculate College is that what is good for the economy is good for society, not just the market. This is based on the firm belief that while our graduates deserve and receive the best possible preparation for participation in the Twenty First Century economy, the very particular institutional ethos that obtains ensures that they are not simply geared for participation in the Smart Economy, but for creation of a Just Economy

5.0 |

the strategy



5.1 | The Pillars of Our Plan

The MIC Strategic Plan 2012-16 rests on 7 foundational pillars. Each pillar represents a thematic imperative that is fundamental to the College and essential to its strategic development in the coming years.

Pillar 1 Mission and identity of the College as a Catholic Institution of Higher Education

Pillar 2 Excellence in teaching and learning and in advanced scholarship and research

Pillar 3 A high quality and holistic learning experience, enabling the flourishing of our students' lives

Pillar 4 An international dimension to all College activities

Pillar 5 Commitment to making a positive difference in our community, locally, regionally, nationally, and globally

Pillar 6 A learning environment and work place of the highest quality

Pillar 7 Best Practice, efficiency and effectiveness in governance, leadership and management

These pillars support a series of goal statements and targets and over the next five years they will support several horizontal and vertical levels of activity, from annualised action planning, to implementation and outcome monitoring. The activity at these levels will be characterised by close coordination and integration between planning and implementation processes, with a particular emphasis in raising strategic and operational cohesion.

Mission and identity of the College as a Catholic Institution of Higher Education

5.2.1 Premise

Strategy-making can have real meaning only through the presence of a vital and continuing conversation about the distinctive identity and values that govern both continuity and endeavour. Our College was established in 1898 and, in the context of that period, its founding represented the physical expression of a unique and innovative vision. From within a Catholic tradition, the Sisters of Mercy, inspired by Catherine McAuley, sought to pursue engagement with all members of the community, particularly the most marginalised in society, to offer the opportunity to reach individual potential through education, which they saw as the key determinant of quality of life.

Inevitably, as we seek to navigate the second decade of the Twenty First Century, we must ask ourselves, and invite others to explore with us, what it now means to be a Catholic College of Education & the Liberal Arts. We strongly believe that the rationale that underpinned the founding of our College has as much resonance in the current context as it did 114 years ago. In the climate of economic renewal that must surely take place in the coming years, higher education will play a critical role in benefitting all members of our society.

While the continued relevance of the Mercy vision crystallises around a very tangible socio-economic *raison d'être*, the institutional primacy of the Catholic ethos demands to be reconciled intellectually with the tenets of academic freedom, the respect for diversity and the paramountcy of including individuals of all religious faiths and none amongst our learning community, all of which are integral to our set of values.

The theologian Lieven Boeve has proposed a model for the contemporary Catholic university, describing it as that which is at the service of identity formation in a plural context. This model calls for an honest dialogue with all stakeholders within that plural context, where Christianity has a preferential option in the conversation. Rather than allowing obvious questions about institutional identity remain latent, or to intrude in a chaotic manner, what is intended by our plan is to create a framework for an open dialogue and exchange amongst all our stakeholders. This is essential not only to bring about the kind of intellectual reconciliation described above but to ensure that our institutional distinctiveness is enlivened by an understanding and awareness of why our College was founded, what it stands for in 2012, and how its continuing relevance – and importance – is recognised in our connections with our students, our staff, our partners, our peers and our funders.

The National Strategy for Education challenges third level providers to set out the distinctiveness of their respective institutions in order to avert drift and amorphousness within the sector. This further beckons MIC to reassert its unique institutional identity and to bring about greater awareness of its contribution to the continuum of educational provision as well as the role it plays as an active partner and contributor within the wider community. The goals and targets we have set below are designed to achieve this.

5.2.2 Goals & Targets

Goal 1 To enable an ongoing dialogue between all members of the College community that engages perspectives on the Catholic identity of the College itself as well as its connection with the consonant value we place on pluralism, inclusion and social justice

- Targets**
- Series of rich discussions, in a variety of formats and fora, where members of the College community are satisfied with the opportunity to engage and advance their own perspectives
 - Tangible and accessible model of Catholic higher education agreed, adopted and communicated as the vehicle for describing institutional identity of MIC

Goal 2 To engage with external stakeholders and partners to raise awareness and understanding of the model of Catholic higher education adopted by the College

- Targets**
- Examples of positive, discursive engagement between MIC and students (current and prospective), our staff, our partners, our peers and our funders, leading to effective recognition and understanding of our institutional identity

Goal 3 To explore and celebrate the Catholic intellectual tradition

- Targets**
- % increase in research outputs, particularly across disciplines, engaging with issues central to the Catholic intellectual tradition
 - Number of internally-hosted workshops, seminars, lecture series, conferences, networking events

Goal 4 To lend a strong voice to advocacy for the value of Catholic Education

- Targets**
- Number of research outputs
 - Contributions to public discourse and policy
 - Engagement with sectoral peers, leading to positive recognition of the valuable role played by Catholic Education at all levels of educational provision

Goal 5 We will seek to develop a vibrant spiritual dimension to College life

- Targets**
- Well resourced Chaplaincy and pastoral care service, strongly integrated within coordinated professional support structures
 - Number of student-led initiatives aimed at exploration of the spiritual dimension of the student experience

5.3 Excellence in teaching and learning and in advanced scholarship and research

Our second pillar cuts to the core of our mission as a higher education institution. MIC has a rich history of innovation and pioneering activity in teaching and learning as the first College of Education to be established outside Dublin, the first to offer a Liberal Arts programme and the first to produce both a Bachelor of Education degree in Education & Psychology and a Bachelor of Arts in Early Childhood Care & Education. Today, the College stands at the brink of a new and exciting period for teaching and learning and the pursuit of research, replete with both challenges and opportunities for our core mission. The College will meet these challenges by locating its responses within and across the following inter-linked strategic contexts:

- Undergraduate Studies
- Postgraduate Studies
- Diversity of Participation, Progression & Lifelong Learning
- The Teaching & Learning Culture
- The Research Culture
- Inter-institutional Programme Development & Delivery

5.3.1 Undergraduate Studies

5.3.1.1 Premise

Since mid-2010, the College has been intensively engaged in a process of review aimed at re-conceptualisation of its flagship Bachelor of Education programme and incorporation of the criteria set down by the Teaching Council for a new four-year model for primary Teacher Education. The advent of the four-year model is warmly welcomed by the College as recognition of the extensive and in-depth academic preparation required of the beginning teacher in the Twenty First Century class-room. Following comprehensive internal and external dialogue which took place in 2010-11, delivery of this new programme will commence in September 2012. Managing the significant complexity associated with its roll-out, as well as monitoring its outcomes and maintaining our commitment to continuous reflection and improvement, will be key features of our strategic development over the next four years.

We are confident that we will offer a distinctive programme that bears all the hallmarks of un-matched quality for which MIC has long been recognised. Our academic staff will continue to be regarded amongst their peers as among the very finest within their profession. They will deliver a learning programme that is informed by cutting edge research, partnership with the full spectrum of stakeholders and practitioners, and that encompasses the gamut of knowledge, critical faculties and professional skills we believe are required of teachers. We will exceed the expectations of those charged with regulating the teaching profession and we will ensure that our graduates themselves raise the standard of learning and

achievement of all children in all classrooms, regardless of whatever socio-economic circumstances, faith or ethos that may prevail there. We believe that our nation's children require this by necessity, and deserve this by right. We also believe that this work will represent a major and exponential contribution by MIC to the burgeoning Knowledge Society. That new society will be inherited by a generation of children superbly prepared for harnessing their own potential, by teachers of the highest quality.

We will build on the excellence and reputation of our Liberal Arts programme and draw upon the wide-ranging expertise of our faculty members to develop a multiplicity of programmes that increase the range of choice for our students. Furthermore, we will highlight and champion the value of an education in the Humanities and promote recognition of the highly valuable qualities acquired by outstanding graduates in the Liberal Arts. We will work with schools and our partners in the wider community, especially employers, to assert the particular characteristics of our Humanities graduates, including the essential pre-requisites they bring to a host of professional areas, amongst them rich imagination, creativity, a finely honed capacity for critical analysis and the skills to communicate ideas effectively.

We will foster new ways of imagining our educational offerings by identifying opportunities for cross-fertilisation across our academic departments, our faculties and our disciplines. Development of new programmes based on modular synergies will result from this exploration and we will seek also to identify ways in which we can contribute to a wider and more differentiated continuum of undergraduate provision by optimising the potential of our own professional competencies and resources through inter-institutional collaboration.

Our founding vision will continue to inform our deep commitment to widening educational participation at third level by enhancing our own access, retention and progression strategies. We have been a leading innovator in this area over the course of the last two decades and we must consolidate that work and increase our efforts to meet the special challenges that will be presented as the State undertakes the task of moving from a prolonged period of recession towards economic buoyancy. In this task we will be guided especially by the entreaty to our learning community that is contained in our Mission Statement: to be just and compassionate in the service of others and to strive for equity in society.

We hold that our graduates deserve and receive the best possible preparation for participation in the Twenty First Century economy, and we will ensure also that they are not simply geared for participation in the Knowledge Economy, but for creation of a Just Economy.

5.3.1.2 Goals & Targets

Goal 1	To be recognised, nationally and internationally, as a provider of the highest quality of third level undergraduate education
Targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased % share of CAO preferences for all programmes • Increased % share of high achieving CAO entrants for all programmes • % increase in mature student intake from competitive entry routes • Participation in objective, peer-led evaluations of MIC provision leading to clear evidence of the high quality and innovative characteristics of our academic programmes (and service delivery systems) and benchmarking in a comparative context

Goal 2 To implement a process of programme re-conceptualisation with emphasis on (a) creation of collaborative intra-faculty and inter-faculty offerings and (b) learning outcomes that are focused on the fostering of critical and creative thinking and outstanding communication skills, that are informed by inclusive discourse on changing professional needs, that promote lifelong learning and that complement the institutional ethos and values of the College.

- Targets**
- Unique, innovative and outstanding 4-Year Bachelor of Education programme finalised, approved, resourced and launched by September 2012
 - Comprehensive consultative review of potential opportunities for undergraduate programme development within and between both faculties, leading to implementation of recommendations
 - Number of new offerings developed, approved, resourced and launched, including Single Honours degree options in the Liberal Arts
 - Evidence of increased inter-changeability of academic modules within different programme configurations
 - Structured consultation undertaken with external partners in public and private sectors towards mutual recognition of the educational currency acquired by MIC graduates as well as the key characteristics and essential skills imperative for entry to the Labour Market

5.3.2 Postgraduate Studies

5.3.2.1 Premise

Clearly, it is essential, not just for this institution, but for the development of the high value economy targeted by national policy, that we continue to develop postgraduate provision at MIC. Demand by aspiring students is high and, despite the economic factors which are currently affecting access to postgraduate opportunities, it is likely that over the next four years students will continue to be attracted to postgraduate study by the prospect of adding to their skills-base and their currency in the labour market.

Key challenges for us will be to attract higher proportions of prospective graduate students to the College particularly those from other institutions and from abroad. We will build on the steady increases in enrolment of doctoral students experienced in recent years and bring about a significant upswing in graduating numbers.

We will significantly enhance our support structures for postgraduate students and match outstanding academic provision with high quality and fully coordinated professional supports specifically tailored to individual needs. We will provide improved workspace dedicated to postgraduate students, fully equipped with the range of learning and research tools essential to postgraduate study. Through the development of a new Graduate School, we will invest in the development of our management framework for postgraduate studies and bring about closer integration, complementarity and information-flow within the overall institutional management structure. We will continue to work in close collaboration with other third level providers, particularly our partners in the Shannon Consortium with whom we will seek ways to deploy our resources collectively, and work to reduce barriers to access by students aspiring to postgraduate study.

5.3.2.2 Goals & Targets

Goal 1 To grow our postgraduate learning and research community by expanding our range of opportunities for postgraduate study, with particular emphasis on increasing provision at doctoral level

- Targets
- Number of new postgraduate programmes developed, approved and launched
 - Number of new and innovative postgraduate targeting methodologies developed and implemented
 - % increase in number of full time postgraduate students, both pursuing taught programmes and research, having (a) progressed from within MIC and (b) enrolled following study at other institutions
 - % increase in number of Structured and Professional Doctorate programmes
 - % increase in number of doctoral students

Goal 2 To review and significantly enhance our postgraduate management framework and support structures

- Targets
- Task force established and consultative review conducted
 - Review recommendations implemented as appropriate
 - Establishment of a Graduate School
 - Evidence of greater integration of postgraduate studies administration and support structures within MIC management framework and increased efficiency and effectiveness of information flows

Goal 3 To improve the quality of the MIC postgraduate student experience

- Targets
- Consultative review of postgraduate student experience at MIC
 - Establishment of dedicated, fully equipped, resourced and clustered work-space for postgraduate students
 - Improved communications, consultation mechanisms and information delivery for postgraduate students

Goal 4 To create increased opportunities, through support, advice and guidance, for postgraduate participation in research dissemination and publication opportunities

- Targets
- Postgraduate and Research structures more closely aligned in support of research dissemination by postgraduate students
 - Number of postgraduate students availing of advice and guidance for research dissemination
 - % increase in research publication and dissemination by postgraduates

5.3.3 Continuing Professional Development

5.3.3.1 Premise

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is a major component of our academic provision. MIC is widely recognised by practitioner teachers as a centre of excellence in Teacher Education and a provider of highly relevant and superbly delivered professional development programmes.

We will build on our significant profile in this area by increasing opportunities for in-career education. Our magnificent campus facilities offer professionals an opportunity to up-skill in a learning environment of un-matched quality. We will develop more flexible delivery strategies that incorporate blended learning, use of ICTs (such as the Virtual Learning Environment) and summer school formats to ensure that we maximise opportunities for busy professionals. We will ensure close coordination between our CPD structures and our other student support services so that those pursuing in-career education receive a learning experience that matches that of our full-time students in terms of quality and our commitment.

5.3.3.2 Goals & Targets

Goal 1 To broaden our provision for CPD with reference to national policy, international best practice and current professional needs

- Targets
- Review of existing provision and assessment of need
 - Number of new CPD programmes introduced
 - % increase in CPD intake

Goal 2 To enhance the quality, diversity and flexibility of our CPD delivery strategies and learning experience

- Targets
- Increased evidence of (a) blended learning (b) ICT strategies
 - Expansion of Summer School and Winter School opportunities
 - Seamless coordination between CPD infrastructure and ancillary student support services
 - Evaluation of graduate learning experiences

5.3.4 Diversity of Participation, Progression & Lifelong Learning

5.3.4.1 Premise

In harmony with our institutional ethos, we at MIC have maintained a particular focus on extending equity of opportunity to all in society. The Mercy tradition holds that education is an essential means toward quality of life and that the university-level institution should be available for participation by all as a shared asset of the wider community. We are stewards of that asset and our efforts to widen participation on behalf of all members of the community have resulted in significant examples of innovation and increased levels of entry for non-traditional students through a broad range of access pathways such as our Foundation Certificate for Mature Learners, our development of a methodology for supporting ring-fenced CAO entry by students from backgrounds of socio-economic disadvantage (subsequently incorporated by the HEAR Scheme) and a partnership with the National Institute for Intellectual Disability which has led to a dedicated and accredited academic programme for students with intellectual disabilities.

These are just some examples of the continuous work we have done to locate the third level experience squarely within the context of social inclusion. We have matched such efforts with retention and progression supports such as our Learner Support Service and our Access and Disability Office to ensure that the additional services required by students who have experienced prior marginalisation from educational experience are targeted, tailored and coordinated. More recently we have worked intensively

and productively with our partners in the Shannon Consortium to provide inter-institutional cooperation towards access and progression.

Our challenges over the next four years derive from the extra demand for education and up- skilling in a rapidly shifting economic context, coupled with the need to expand our focused supports for non-traditional entrants. While our responses for increased demand for participation have been very successful, the proliferation of non-traditional students and the complexity of services we have introduced has resulted in the need to significantly enhance coordination and integration between the structures and teams working in this area, with the building of more robust linkages between academic and professional staff being a key goal.

We must also enhance our targeting and outreach strategies within external community contexts and along the life-cycle continuum, in partnership with other stakeholders working within the domains of social inclusion, community development and local governance.

We must also remind ourselves that life-long learning is a good of itself and not solely an instrument of the economic milieu. Here it is noted that the National Strategy for Education sets a target for higher education entry by mature students of 25% by 2025 and, with our ageing population, we and our many partners in the education sector are called upon to provide more opportunities both for those who wish to enrich their lives by learning. The learning experience of our entire campus community will, in turn, be equally enriched by diversity of participation and these benefits will accrue to our students, in particular, through the exchange of perspective that follows between a more differentiated learning cohort.

5.3.4.2 Goals & Targets

Goal 1 To significantly increase the breadth and diversity of our student community in alignment with national targets for inclusive participation and lifelong learning

- Targets
- Agreement on annual and cumulative student intake targets for period of Strategic Plan with reference to national targets and inter-institutional strategy (see below)
 - Effective targeting and outreach strategies developed and implemented with critical emphasis on partnership with key stakeholders in the community, public and statutory sectors
 - Effective communication strategies in place for (a) internal information and guidance in relation to strategies for diversity of participation and inclusion (b) for prospective learners along the life-cycle, beginning with early years through to pre-entry
 - Coordination with MIC research staff and external partners focusing on barriers to educational participation to identify and respond appropriately to barriers to inclusion along the life-cycle (c.f. Pillar 5)
 - Targets achieved across all demographic and socio-economic learner categories

Goal 2 Significant enhancement of coordination of leadership, infrastructure and resourcing towards diversity of participation and lifelong learning

- Targets
- Co-sponsored task force review by An Bord Acadúil (Academic Council) and Coiste Bainistíochta an Choláiste (College Management Committee) to explore existing coordination, infrastructure and resourcing
 - Structures re-configured / introduced as appropriate and sufficiency of resourcing in place to meet intake and retention targets

Goal 3 To enhance retention and progression rates

- Targets
- Effective monitoring and reporting system in place with secure and confidential data flows between relevant support units
 - Multi-skilled, integrated support teams in place
 - Stronger operational linkages between academic staff and professional staff for ensuring student retention and progression
 - Increased number of flexible programme delivery options in place (e.g. part-time provision student-friendly scheduling, greater use of Virtual Learning Environments, Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL))
 - Enhanced system of financial support for students (including students in difficulty) with increase evidence of linkages fostered for contributions under Corporate Social coordination with external agencies providing grants and other aids.
 - Evidence of % increases in retention and progression above current baselines

Goal 4 To develop enhanced outreach strategies for life-long learning, with emphasis on partnership with education, community, public and statutory sectors

- Targets
- Community-based learning initiatives designed to widen diversity of participation in mainstream provision at MIC
 - Number of innovative and open campus-based learning initiatives specifically designed to introduce all sections of our community to university-level learning experiences, to promote life-long learning and to attract prospective students to access mainstream provision at MIC / partner institutions
 - Evidence of coordination and complementarity between MIC life-long learning initiatives and partner initiatives
 - Evidence of effective information dissemination in concert with external partners aimed at awareness-raising around learning along the life-cycle and access points available

5.3.5 The Teaching & Learning Culture

5.3.5.1 Premise

Because of our historical focus on Teacher Education, MIC has always had a strong commitment to the principle of professional development. We have applied this principle in outreach to practitioners teaching in the primary school system in numerous examples of provision for Continuing Professional Development (CPD). We have also concentrated much effort in development of our faculty, fostering innovation in teaching and learning, alongside a strong emphasis on the connection between teaching and research, as part of our ethos.

Following the establishment of a Centre for Teaching & Learning (CTL) in 2007, we have concentrated our efforts on providing a service for faculty that facilitates student evaluation of teaching. The Student Evaluation of Teaching process (SET) is a key instrument in quality assurance of teaching at MIC and frequent participation by academic staff is seen as part of a cycle of learning that informs better delivery as well as the approach taken by ancillary support services for students such as the Learner Support Unit.

We note that a focus on teaching and learning is core to the *National Strategy for Education* which advocates joined-up approaches which, it is proposed, will fall within the framework of a new National Academy for the Enhancement of Teaching & Learning. Having worked very closely with our partners in the Shannon Consortium to launch coordinated initiatives in teaching and learning under the Strategic Innovation Fund we welcome further developments towards support for a community of practice in this area.

Challenges that we envisage include the need to ensure that our institution and all other HEIs enjoy equity of participation in the governance of such structures as the National Academy. We will also work collaboratively with our partners to advocate for sustainability of any external initiatives having experienced the draw-backs to finite resourcing under SIF, disseminated through a competitive process that worked against the spirit of partnership and collegiality we believe is essential to teaching and learning.

Internal challenges will be to build on the impetus given to our Centre for Teaching & Learning through SIF by making it part of our mainstream provision and closely integrated with our programme delivery strategies. We also seek to adopt a more cohesive approach to teaching and learning by fostering closer coordination of the broader teaching and learning environment. Teaching & Learning demands intergration of a number of enabling systems, often set apart in HEIs' organisational structures. These systems include quality assurance, IT and AV, funding for staff development (including Training of Trainers) and research. Finally, from a significant baseline, we will continue to build towards a deeply embedded culture of quality teaching and learning by working proactively with our staff and by incentivising and celebrating their excellence in teaching and learning.

5.3.5.2 Goals & Targets

Goal 1 To support teaching and the scholarship of teaching

- Targets
- Significant enhancement of existing teaching and learning leadership, infrastructure and resourcing
 - Demonstrable improvement in systematic coordination between teaching and learning and integral services such as quality assurance, IT/AV, and Research Office

Goal 2 To advocate for, demonstrate and embed exemplary practices and innovation in teaching and learning

- Targets
- % increase in events and initiatives designed effectively highlight and showcase exemplars of excellence and innovation in teaching & learning
 - % increase in staff participation
 - Evidence of increased incorporation of teaching and learning methodologies into curricula syllabi and practice

Goal 3 To provide teaching enhancement interventions which are supportive, voluntary and confidential

- Targets
- Number of Peer Observations of Teaching (POTs) undertaken
 - Number of Teaching Portfolios developed
 - % increase in rate of participation in SETs

Goal 4 To foster collegiality and collaboration amongst faculty and regional institutional partners towards reflective practice and scholarly dialogue on teaching and learning

- Targets
- Continued participation in Shannon Consortium Regional Teaching & Learning Awards initiative as well as participation in national award programmes from the National Academy
 - Participation in and organisation of regional Teaching & Learning workshops and symposia
 - Significant contribution to, participation in and inclusion with the National Academy for Teaching & Learning

Goal 5 To significantly advance and embed incorporation of blended learning strategies and new technologies in the teaching and learning environment and programme design

- Targets
- Review of challenges and opportunities for MIC in incorporation of blended learning strategies and new technologies for teaching and learning
 - Number of programmes modified / newly designed to incorporate blended learning and new technologies
 - Number of new technologies provided and administered effectively and cohesively in collaboration with teaching and learning structures
 - Number of training interventions for design, roll-out and use of blended learning strategies and new technologies for teaching and learning
 - Evaluation of integration and effectiveness of blended learning strategies and new technologies for teaching and learning

5.3.6 The Research Culture

5.3.6.1 Premise

Research is integral to teaching and learning and essential to knowledge growth. It is a fundamental cornerstone of higher education and, accordingly, of the National Strategy. Research underpins the educational process, benefitting students and academic staff by enhancing and enriching the teaching and learning experience. Research makes a difference, sharpening the critical intellect to assess and evaluate, to weigh and to measure, to calculate and to review, and to learn from the experience of the past how best we can proceed into the future. These are the skills of the here and now, and these are the skills most acutely required among the graduates of the Twenty First Century. These are the skills we seek to imbue among students of the College, and these are the skills we aspire to see in our graduates.

In the coming period, Mary Immaculate College will commit to supporting and resourcing the on-going development of the research skills base among our staff and students. In recent years the College has invested heavily in building its research skills base, through financial supports, staff up-skilling, external collaboration and dedicated administrative structures. This has produced rich dividends, with staff engagement in research now at an all-time high, as evidenced by an almost exponential increase in staff publications and presentations at professional conferences over recent years.

This effort will be maintained and developed further, and the cross-fertilisation of research with teaching and learning will be a particular focus for us in the coming years, along with an increased emphasis on research that contributes significantly to public policy. Through research and knowledge transfer, Mary Immaculate College will contribute to the Irish economy as well as to quality of life at local, regional, national and international levels.

5.3.6.2 Goals & Targets

Goal 1 To cultivate an increased awareness of the role of research as an integral part of academic endeavour

- Targets
- Number of staff-focused initiatives and information strategies aimed at promotion of research activity
 - % increase in overall research engagement by staff
 - % increase in doctoral qualifications held by staff
 - Number of student-focused initiatives aimed at promotion of research activity
 - % increase in overall research engagement by students

Goal 2 To recognise, support and incentivise excellence and achievement in research

- Targets
- Review conducted of current supports, challenges and opportunities surrounding research engagement by staff, resulting in related recommendations
 - Number of review recommendations adopted and implemented
 - Number of incentivisation systems aimed at increases in individual staff research outputs
 - % of staff availing of research supports
 - % increase in number of externally-funded research appointments

Goal 3 To ensure that the College supports effective leadership in the field of research

- Targets
- Enhanced College infrastructure for the support of research and coordinated engagement by staff
 - Develop and operationalise research engagement and output data capture systems linked to central management information systems
 - Number of Personal Research Plans (PRPs) and Departmental Research Plans (DRPs) negotiated and agreed
 - Number of benchmarking exercises aimed at informing MIC research strategies and aligning output with commensurate national and international standards

Goal 4 To increase research support from external sources

- Targets
- Number of external funding opportunities accessed
 - % increase in research income from external sources

Goal 5 To establish direction and priorities for inter-disciplinary research

- Targets
- Review conducted of current supports, challenges and opportunities surrounding inter-disciplinary research engagement by staff, resulting in related recommendations
 - Number of review recommendations adopted and implemented
 - % increase in inter-disciplinary research activity involving inter-faculty, inter-institutional collaboration
 - Number of inter-disciplinary studentships introduced

- Number of inter-disciplinary seminars
- Number of new centres established for inter-disciplinary research focused on agreed themes

Goal 6 To foster research collaborations with HEIs, employers, commercial partners, local development stakeholders and public agencies

- Targets
- % research and knowledge transfer initiatives aimed at enhancing public policy and practice
 - % research and knowledge transfer initiatives through commercial partnership leading to increase in value of the Knowledge Economy
 - Number of collaborative research linkages and research networks created with other HEIs at regional, national and international level
 - Number of inter-institutional applications for research funding opportunities
 - % successful inter-institutional applications for research funding opportunities
 - Review and recommendations leading to increased participation in scholar exchange programmes
 - Number of recommendations implemented
 - Number of and % increase in scholar exchange

Goal 7 To promote the status and recognition of MIC as a research active College

- Targets
- Increased collaboration with Corporate Communications function to devise and implement awareness-raising strategies for research activities and outputs
 - Demonstrable increase in recognition of MIC research profile

5.3.7 Inter-institutional Programme Development & Delivery

5.3.7.1 Premise

In its recommendations towards increased synergy and resource optimisation between higher education institutions, the National Strategic for Education cites the Shannon Consortium as a pioneering exemplar of the model of clustering envisaged. As a member of the Shannon Consortium, MIC recognises the dividends for the Exchequer, the student community, our scholars and our administrative infrastructures, of inter-institutional cooperation and coordination. Success indicators are distributed across many contexts of the higher education enterprise but it is in programme delivery where many of the most exciting developments have happened already and which, undoubtedly, lie ahead.

In the coming years, we aim to significantly increase the instances of inter-institutional programme delivery involving MIC that are already in place (e.g. Structured PhD in Education delivered in conjunction with UL, Structured PhD in Philosophy of Art and Culture in conjunction with UL and NUIG).

A cardinal feature of our inter-institutional academic strategy will be to build on existing collaboration for widening participation and lifelong learning at third level by further development of and participation in joined-up approaches to targeting and outreach and building effective and appropriate access and progression pathways that provide clear routes within and between institutions for learners.

5.3.7.2 Goals & Targets

Goal 1 To foster closer collaboration with partner institutions towards inter-institutional delivery of academic programmes

- Targets
- Joint review of new possibilities for inter-institutional undergraduate and postgraduate module and programme creation and co-delivery with partner HEIs, with particular emphasis on opportunities involving the University of Limerick within the Shannon Consortium framework
 - Number of new modules and programmes jointly designed and delivered at all relevant NFQ levels
 - Institutional ethos and values embedded in programme design and learning outcomes

Goal 2 To maintain a high quality student-centred focus in inter-institutional delivery strategies

- Targets
- Effective and coordinated academic monitoring, student support and teaching and learning systems in place
 - Number of shared service agreements in place for academic support

Goal 3 To further develop inter-institutional pathways for access to third level learning opportunities and for progression

- Targets
- Joint review of challenges and opportunities establishing joined-up targeting, outreach and access pathways
 - Number of new inter-institutional initiatives for outreach and access in place
 - Evidence of effectiveness of inter-institutional outreach, access and retention strategies
 - Evidence of increased learner progression between MIC and partner institutions

5.4 | Commitment to a high quality and holistic learning experience, enabling the flourishing of our students' lives

5.4.1 Premise

If teaching and learning and research, taken together, represent the core mission of the College, the lives of our students are at the heart of our concerns. What makes the student experience at MIC unique is two things, predominantly. First, our institutional ethos demands that we consider the student as a whole person, located not simply within an educational frame for subjective reasons, but within a space that enables them to recognise themselves within the wider world, stirred by the entreaty contained within our Mission Statement to make a difference within that broader context. This ethos keeps continuity with the vision of Catherine McAuley: that the human being is a person of dignity called to flourish.

The second distinctive aspect of student life at MIC is our strenuous emphasis on providing our students with a range of supports and opportunities that correspond to multiple and diverse needs, enabling them to enjoy a richly holistic learning experience. Our academic staff work in close concert with our professional services staff to ensure a coherent system of provision, several examples of which have been replicated elsewhere in the higher education sector as exemplars of best practice. Our model of governance is strongly oriented towards partnership with the student body and students have representation in a host of decision-making fora, including the *An Bord Rialaithe*. We strive to maintain an informal atmosphere on our campus with staff that are highly experienced and professional yet accessible and friendly.

With the enormous growth that we have experienced over the course of the last two decades, with demand for third level places rising, and a student population more widely differentiated than ever, maintaining the exceptional characteristics and quality of our learning experience presents us with new challenges as we look forward to the next five years of our development. The task must be to identify ways of maintaining our reputation for high quality, multi-faceted and student-centred provision by seeking out new ways of working. We will enhance our framework for coordinated and integrated service delivery.

We will explore ways of working with our partners in the Shannon Consortium to expand the range of shared delivery practices. We will continue to work in close partnership with the student body also, with a particular focus on more extensive dialogue aimed at better understanding students' perceptions, hearing their concerns and enhancing communication in order to modify our provision as appropriate.

5.4.2 Goals & Targets

Goal 1 To ensure the prominence of a student-centred culture throughout support services that are cohesive and multifaceted

- Targets
- Consultative review of student support services focusing on maintaining the fullest provision for the whole-student approach, effectiveness of service integration and linkage with academic provision, and efficient coordination within management infrastructure
 - Recommendations implemented, new structures in place

Goal 2 To provide excellent career advice, guidance and linkage with employers

- Targets
- Leadership and infrastructure for cross-College career advice and employer linkage service in place
 - Opportunities for shared delivery of career advice and employer linkage service
 - Number of students availing of careers service
 - % increase in linkages built with employers
 - Graduate employment surveys completed using quantitative and qualitative methodologies
 - Cross-College student work experience placement programme

Goal 3 To significantly enhance student communications

- Targets
- Academic feedback culture and mechanisms significantly enhanced
 - Student perceptions of academic feedback systems continuously monitored
 - Range of new student-centred information delivery protocols in place
 - Student enrolment, registration and payments systems significantly enhanced
 - Student communications fora established

Goal 4 To encourage and maintain participation and representation of students in decision-making

- Targets
- Student representation on decision-making fora
 - Evidence of strong culture of partnership and dialogue with students

Goal 5 To recognise and celebrate student achievements and contributions outside the curriculum

- Targets
- Protocols for incentivising and rewarding student achievement reviewed
 - Civic and community engagement by students recognised

An international dimension to all College activities

5.5.1 Premise

Fostering and developing the international dimension of College activities will be a key priority for us over the next five years. One of our core objectives during the course of this Strategic Plan is to enrich the culture of the College and the diversity of our campus community. We will achieve this by significantly increasing the number of international students choosing MIC as a learning destination as well as supporting more of our full-time students to choose placements in partner universities abroad. Broadening our learning community in this fashion will enliven our campus culture.

We have a very proud track record in the area of international student exchange with an average intake of 70 international students per annum for the last number of years. However, until very recently our capacity to welcome larger numbers has been constrained by limited teaching space and accommodation. The desire to achieve growth in this area was an important part of the reasoning behind the design of our three-stage Campus Development Plan and with the first two phases of this completed between 2007 and 2010 we are primed to capitalise on the major increase in teaching space available to us. Indeed, having succeeded in the creation of a truly world-class campus, this, together with our excellent undergraduate and postgraduate academic programmes, and the positioning of the College within an important regional gateway in the West, makes MIC exceptionally attractive to prospective international students.

We will now intensify our efforts to diversify and re-conceptualise our academic offerings towards this end, introducing internationally-themed elements that will add appeal to the existing emphasis on Irish tradition, culture and society that already offers a unique and exciting learning programme to visiting students. The attraction of study in Ireland for learners from Catholic third level institutions will be leveraged also.

We will couple our efforts to attract international students with greater support for our own students to enjoy the enormous benefits of time spent on a learning-abroad programme. We will enhance and develop our international student support structures as well as our strategic outreach in order to seek out new partners and agree memoranda of understanding for mutual benefit. We will develop new delivery models aimed at distance learning that will include summer and winter school programmes, courses in professional development and online learning opportunities in order to invite a combination of professional practitioners and life-long learners to avail of flexible options for a unique and high quality international educational experience.

Our greatest asset, our staff community, will benefit from a significantly increased commitment to academic mobility through peer exchange. We will increase our number of linkage agreements with partner universities for mutual hosting of scholars and we will invest further in academic staff development supports that enable our staff to travel for research, teaching and learning and conference attendance. We will build strong links with intermediary funding organisations towards this aim. And we will complement our internal research activities with efforts to build partnerships within and between international research networks focused on cognate fields and disciplines.

5.5.2 Goals & Targets

Goal 1 To create new high quality infrastructure for the promotion and coordination of international learning experiences and scholar exchange

- Targets
- New International Office operational and working cohesively with related College functions
 - Detailed plan for the promotion and coordination of international learning experiences and scholar exchange prepared, implemented and monitored

Goal 2 To significantly increase the number of international students (undergraduate and postgraduate) attending learning programmes at MIC

- Targets
- Number of new Memoranda of Understanding signed with partner universities
 - Number of new academic programmes designed at undergraduate and postgraduate levels with elements attractive to learners from abroad
 - Enhanced targeting, outreach and international marketing strategies in place
 - % increase in number of full-time students visiting MIC for study-abroad periods / exchange programmes.

Goal 3 To increase international mobility for academic staff peer networking, teaching and learning and research opportunities

- Targets
- Increased investment in staff mobility
 - % increase in number of staff availing of mobility opportunities

Goal 4 To provide high quality and flexible opportunities at MIC for Continuing Professional Development and life-long learning

- Targets
- Number of new Continuing Professional Development and life-long learning programmes designed with range of characteristics designed to offer flexible participation options
 - Enhanced targeting, outreach and international marketing strategies in place
 - % increase in participation in Continuing Professional Development and life-long learning programmes

5.6 | Making a positive difference in our community, locally, regionally, nationally, and globally

5.6.1 Premise

In harmony with its distinctive ethos and founding vision, the College has a very rich history of engagement with all sectors within the wider community. This College is here, first and foremost, to make a difference for the good of our shared community.

While the College has contributed much to the wider community through its mission to promote inclusion through education, its work has long been underpinned by a clear recognition that this enterprise has many stakeholders and that a commitment to partnership is just as essential as the enterprise itself. This is why the most fundamental characteristics of our work to make a difference – our competency in addressing educational marginalisation and our spirit of partnership – can be clearly recognised in each of those endeavours.

Examples include establishment of the Curriculum Development Unit which has leveraged academic expertise and facilitated partnerships with other stakeholders for the pursuit of research and development of resources aimed at the Early Learning environment, class-room management and Special Education, to name a few. The College has engaged with a range of networks within Limerick City and its environs (most recently in concert with its Shannon Consortium partners) and currently has representation on the local Partnership Company (PAUL Partnership), fora established through the Limerick Regeneration Agencies such as the Older Persons' Forum and the Limerick Incredible Years Strategic Steering Group. Our staff have made very significant research contributions through many of these fora including the mapping of local availability of services for children and interactions between families and these services (through the Children's Services Committee), as well as evaluation of the impact of the Incredible Years programme in Limerick. The Transforming Education through Dialogue (TED) Project has a long history of facilitating linkages between mainstream primary schools and the community through the PLUS Network of urban disadvantaged schools (as well as rural based networks). College staff have provided their expertise to local strategic planning by Limerick City Development Board, particularly in socio-economic and demographic mapping for which the College has a major national and international profile, as well as in development of a learning strategy for the city, based on coordinated partnership approaches. At national level, College staff have been working on highly successful projects aimed at Maths Recovery and at Special Education in partnership with the Department of Education & Skills as well as with DEIS Primary Schools.

Similarly, our expertise in, and many contributions to educational inclusion in the Developing World have most recently been carried out in partnership with Irish Aid, representatives of the higher education sector in Northern Ireland and a host of African countries in projects that have included joint educational research and Teacher Education.

At a macro level, the challenge for our College and for all of our partners, will be to confront the potential expansion and entrenchment of marginalisation of deprived communities in a period of pro-longed economic down-turn. We are also challenged to work more efficiently and effectively within coordinated and integrated settings underpinned by joint commitment and, most importantly, by mutual trust. For MIC itself, a particular obstacle must be surmounted within the coming years.

Notwithstanding our focus on working outside of the walls of our College, our physical campus has remained relatively isolated within its own wider community. We have succeeded only partly in fully conveying that our estate and our resources are at the service of our entire community and that all are welcome here. It is of particularly critical importance to Limerick City, at whose very heart we are situated, that the economic, social, cultural and civic capital that is immanent to MIC is put at the disposal of all members of our shared community. We have begun this process with a very deliberate act: we have demolished the physical boundary walls that have obscured our campus from view for far too long. This is our way of expressing a number of crucially important messages. The lowering of our walls is intended as a statement that "Mary Immaculate College is open for business." It says: "Mary Immaculate College is a beautiful place and we want to reveal this to you." It says: "This place is part of our shared heritage." It says: "We belong to your community and you are part of ours." It says: "Come in. You are welcome here. This is your space." And in the same vein, our investment in our new, state-of-the-art, 500-auditorium, the Lime Tree Theatre, is intended as a major contribution by the College to the life-blood of our city, situating MIC back in the community, where it belongs, after so many years obscured behind high walls.

5.6.2 Goals & Targets

Goal 1 To advance social inclusion through the medium of education and a strategy of partnership

- Targets
- Membership / leadership of number of local, regional and national and international networks and partnerships promoting the principle of social inclusion through education
 - Number of research projects completed focusing on curriculum development, educational inclusion and Continuing Professional Development for practitioners addressing social exclusion and poverty issues in their work
 - Number of collaborative initiatives, including research, involving partners in the Shannon Consortium as well as other agencies and organisations, aimed at promoting social inclusion through education
 - Number of campus-based learning initiatives aimed at promotion of educational inclusion

Goal 2 To foster a spirit of justice and commitment to the service of others amongst our College community

- Targets
- Evidence of increased service contributions by staff
 - Number of academic modules incorporating civic engagement / volunteering as fulfilment requirements
 - Number of initiatives and protocols introduced for staff and students to motivate, recognise and celebrate commitment to the service of the wider community

Goal 3 To increase awareness of the College as integral to the community and part of the shared economic, social, cultural and civic capital

- Targets
- Number of outreach and awareness-raising strategies implemented
 - Evidence of increased usage of campus / College facilities as public space for learning, civic and cultural purposes
 - Evidence of increased usage of campus / College facilities by Regeneration / RAPID communities
 - Evidence of greater integration and more visible recognition of MIC within local and regional economic, social, cultural, civic and governance fora

5.7 | Enhancing our learning environment and providing a work place of the highest quality

5.7.1 Premise

Today, our student community stands at 3,200. One of the greatest challenges we have faced in recent years has been to expand and raise the standard of our campus infrastructure to the level of quality required, and deserved, by our learning community – students, staff and visitors. We have made huge strides in meeting this challenge with the implementation of a 3-phase campus development master plan and achieving our targets for the first two phases of that plan. We have more than doubled our buildings stock and have provided the very highest standards of accommodation and integrated technological infrastructure. We have provided world-class teaching and research space in our new TARA Building which also houses the main hub for key student resources, including the administrative centre of the Mary Immaculate Students' Union (MISU). TARA is also the location for our state-of-the art auditorium – the Lime Tree Theatre – which, in the coming years, will be a focal point for our efforts to promote our campus as a public space. Our multi-purpose sports and recreation complex, Tailteann, was voted RIAI Leisure Building of the Year, 2008.

We have been fortunate to have received significant Exchequer funding for a large proportion of these recent developments and are immensely appreciative of this support. The return on this investment has been of significant value to the State, with increased through-put of graduates educated to the highest standard as well as a research culture of outstanding quality, much of it focused strongly on primary system curriculum development, educational disadvantage and the formulation of strategies for inclusion. The contribution of our graduates to the wider education system and to the Knowledge Economy, as well as the economic contribution of the College and the campus community to Limerick City and its environs, ensures that investment in MIC has a long-term effect.

We have also invested heavily in our estate, laying particular emphasis on adding value to the public space, with the opening up and transformation of our magnificent campus grounds. We have aimed our resources at the fitting out of the *Lime Tree Theatre* as a public auditorium that will act as a key element in local and regional strategies to foster inclusion and civic participation through the performing arts as well as to highlight Limerick City as a place of cultural excellence.

While our future challenges include the need to steward and maintain our estate at a world-class level, there is an urgent need to deliver strategically essential capital development. As we proceed with implementation of the final stage of our campus development master plan, refurbishment and extension of our Library Building must take priority. The existing Library Building was completed in 1979 and intended to accommodate 750 students. A library, well-designed, and properly stocked and equipped, is the lifeblood of a university-level institution and it is imperative that the College succeeds in bringing the existing building to Twenty First Century standards and equipping it to meet the needs of a large and diverse learning community. This is a major objective for us and by the end of this strategic planning period we will have made tangible progress towards its attainment.

The hall-mark of efficient, effective and quality service provision is cohesive interaction between all functional elements within the process. We recognise this and we will strive to bring about significant enhancement of coordination and integration within and between our horizontal and vertical decision-making and implementation processes.

The greatest asset we have in pursuit of our mission is our staff community. We have asked much of our staff during our rapid and significant expansion during the last two decades. More has been asked with the consequences for resourcing and extra pressures on existing staff that have followed under the prevailing economic conditions. At all times our staff community has responded generously and proved equal to the tasks we have faced together. We are fortunate to enjoy the efforts of a staff body with an extraordinarily high level of commitment to academic excellence as well as to the ethos of community, partnership and the high quality whole-student experience that is our most prominent hall-mark.

All members of our staff community deserve the highest levels of support, investment in their development, and well-being at work and we will continue to provide this through effective dialogue, excellent communications and a strong spirit of partnership. We will ensure also, that our recruitment and promotional strategies reflect our institutional values of inclusion, equality and diversity and meet the highest standards of transparency, fairness and compliance.

One of our most highly valued founding principles continues to be the usage of *An Ghaeilge* as a primary spoken language in MIC. We will continue to foster usage of the Irish language amongst our students and our staff and we will strive for excellence in service delivery through the medium of Irish in alignment with national goals.

True to our heavy emphasis on the concept of community, we will strive to maintain and enhance our connections and linkage opportunities with both our alumni and our retired colleagues. Those who have departed from our campus will remain a celebrated part of our extended community.

5.7.2 Goals & Targets

Goal 1 To provide our learning community, our visitors, and the wider community with an estate of the highest standard of quality, accessibility and beauty.

- Targets
- % of remaining stages of MIC campus development masterplan completed
 - Number of benchmarking exercises undertaken to establish comparative quality of the MIC estate

Goal 2 To significantly enhance our library infrastructure to fully meet the diversity of needs amongst our learning community and of members of the wider community wishing to share our resources

- Targets
- Evidence of substantial progress towards refurbishment and extension of College Library

Goal 3 To continue to actively promote the Irish language culture 'in all aspects of College life.

- Targets
- Number of initiatives undertaken to foster the excellent reputation of the College in Irish traditional music, song and dance
 - % increase in number of staff up-skilled in usage of Irish
 - % increase in capacity for service delivery through the medium of Irish

Goal 4 To promote and actively support employee well-being, diversity in the work-place and career development for all staff

- Targets
- Implementation of comprehensive HR strategy
 - Number of coordinated initiatives between HR Office, Health Promotion Office and other functional areas to promote employee well-being
 - Review and implementation of Recruitment and Appointment procedures
 - Evidence of resourcing and % increase in uptake and spread of career development opportunities amongst staff
 - Evidence of effective and productive coordination between areas with functional responsibilities and budgets for staff development and training of trainers

Goal 5 To foster relationships between all members of the College community that are governed by mutual respect and a commitment to meaningful consultation and partnership working

- Targets
- Appropriate policies in place
 - Review of appropriate opportunities for partnership engagement

Goal 6 To be environmentally accountable by applying the highest and most sustainable standards to energy usage and waste management and to raise awareness of green issues within the College community

- Targets
- Energy & Environmental Committee established
 - Compliance and targeting under the National Energy Efficiency Plan
 - Annual Reports publishing progress and energy efficiencies achieved
 - Evidence of increased awareness among College community of sustainable energy usage and waste management and % increase in participation in related initiatives

Goal 7 To renew our emphasis on continuous quality assurance and to work as a whole community to situate our work in strategic context, to value and celebrate our endeavours, to actively seek the views of all those whose needs we serve, and to be imaginative in realising the potential for improvement.

- Targets
- Quality Review Schedule approved
 - Number of Quality Reviews undertaken across academic and professional services departments
 - Commencement of IUQA institutional review process

Goal 8 To enhance the management and effectiveness of our external and internal communications, including development of information-sharing systems for prospective learners, current students and alumni, current and former staff, partners, peers and the wider community

- Targets
- Corporate Communications Office established, providing cohesive framework for Marketing & PR, branding, corporate publications, school liaison, media relations, events management, web-based communications and internal communications.
 - Number of new initiatives introduced to enhance user-friendliness IT environment

Goal 9 To cherish, strengthen and celebrate our links with our alumni and our retired staff

- Targets
- Enhanced communications and information-sharing initiatives
 - Number of social engagement and celebratory events held

5.8 | Best practice, efficiency and effectiveness in governance, leadership and management

5.8.1 Premise

Our governance practice is informed by a robust sense of connection to our institutional values, recognition of the key role played by our governance structures in stewardship of our heritage and status as a Catholic institution of higher education, commitment to the highest standards of ethical behaviour and integrity, the imperative of maintaining mission stability through support for excellent academic provision, our sense of place within the wider community and our promise to make a difference within it, and the importance of engaging both critically and constructively with national policy and aligning with policy goals and statutory imperatives. Our approach is based on partnership, trust and collective responsibility.

In the course of implementing our Strategic Plan we will ensure that our governance structures remain equal to the standards we have set and we will engage in monitoring and review towards this objective. We will also enhance the support we provide to the members of our governance structures so that they are fully informed of their responsibilities and that they enjoy complete assistance in providing their essential contribution to the College.

Our management structures will continue to meet the highest standards of transparency and accountability and we will ensure, through these structures, that an increased emphasis on quality of provision and service delivery is embedded and maintained. Our decision-making processes will continue to be influenced by partnership-working and will also be aided by immediate availability of relevant and comprehensive information about operational implementation, alignment with our institutional strategy, input-output data and visible outcomes. We will measure the progress of our implementation and evaluate our strategic outcomes against robust indicators in alignment with overarching Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) generated under the planned consultative process that is intended to proceed from the *National Strategy for Education*.

In our governance and management we will take special cognisance of the objectives set out under the *National Strategy*. We note the importance of consistency with the national priorities set out by the *Strategy* and our plan is fully responsive to these priorities. We will agree annual action plans and targets which contribute directly towards these objectives and provide robust and comparable data demonstrating progress. We will reconfigure our systems and protocols for information management and compliance, incorporating the gamut of information processing tools now available and ensuring, in particular, due confidentiality, data protection and information security as well as public-facing and accessible procedures for Freedom of Information.

The main objective of our governance, leadership and management structures and procedures is the advancement of the College. This means assuring that the institution is adequately resourced and properly promoted so that financial stability obtains concurrently with adequacy and flexibility of resource investment towards continuous development. It also means advancing the reputation of the College and

ensuring that its status, its objectives and its achievements are visible to the wider community, including peers, funding partners, tax payers, prospective staff and students and, not least, to potential donors.

5.8.2 Goals & Strategies

Goal 1 To provide the highest standard of governance, characterised by commitment to our institutional ethos and mission, enlightened visioning, prudent and ethical leadership, inclusive representation and collective responsibility

- Targets
- Adoption of agreed clustering strategy for compliance with re-configuration of higher education landscape (under the *National Strategy for Education*) that preserves the institutional identity, mission and operational integrity of the College
 - Review conducted in support of maintaining the highest standards of ethical, efficient and effective governance
 - Annual business plans based on Strategic Plan approved and monitored, with outputs and outcomes tracked, reported and measured against agreed KPIs
 - Comprehensive induction for members of *An Bord Rialaithe*
 - Review of Standing Committees undertaken
 - Annual Reports approved and published

Goal 2 To ensure efficient, effective and transparent management and decision-making

- Targets
- Enhanced protocols for sharing of information, and communication of decisions
 - Enhanced use of IT environment for decision-making efficiency

Goal 3 To ensure the highest standards of compliance

- Targets
- Review system of compliance reporting to *An Bord Rialaithe*
 - Office of Information Compliance & Records Management established
 - Significant enhancement of Records Retention protocol and system undertaken and implemented
 - Number of staff training initiatives undertaken and evidence of increased awareness of operational roles and responsibilities

Goal 4 To broaden and deepen our commitment to working in partnership with other HEIs and external agencies to further our mission and goals as well as to contribute to the advancement of national priorities and policy imperatives, particularly in the education sector.

- Targets
- Commitment to Shannon Consortium maintained as primary clustering arrangement and % increase in shared approaches / joint initiatives / resource optimisation / shared service delivery
 - Number new collaborative initiatives engaging public, private and community and voluntary sectors for strategic advancement of educational issues

Goal 5 To promote the advancement of the College

- Targets
- Continued support for MIC Foundation
 - % increase in funding from outside the Exchequer
 - Corporate Communications Office established

6.0 |

strategic process & implementation



6.1 | The Process

The MIC Strategic Plan was formally adopted by *An Bord Rialaithe* on 23 March 2012. This represented the culmination of more than four years of preparation that began with the building of a framework based on situational review and SWOT analysis and included a comprehensive and inclusive process of consultation that took place over an extended period and involved the entire College community, including the student body, as well as external stakeholders (see *Appendix A* for a list of the key issues that emerged during internal consultation and which informed the content and layout of the plan, and *Appendix B* for a list of the external stakeholders that were consulted).

During our strategic planning process a number of very significant developments emerged within the operational environment for the higher level sector, generally, as well as for the Colleges of Education, particularly. These included the issuing of central directives to control recruitment to the public sector (including HEIs) and the publication of the National Strategy for Education to 2030, as well as the introduction by the Teaching Council of a four- year model for Primary Teacher Education and the issuing of guidelines and criteria to be followed in the re-conceptualisation of offerings within this new framework.

At a broader remove, the challenges arising from economic decline and the concomitant demand for re-training and education of the labour force have been felt at MIC, as much as at other institutions with a larger and more differentiated cohort of prospective students seeking opportunities at third level. Locally, the regeneration process in Limerick City and the parallel process aimed at integration of the local authorities within a single local government framework have also had important implications for the College, particularly in terms of harnessing its potential to assist with educational inclusion as well as its integral role within the civic space.

These strategic issues were thoroughly discussed by *An Bord Rialaithe* during the course of our strategic planning period and although the MIC Strategic Plan was already at an advanced stage, with extensive consultations undertaken, it was decided to extend the planning period so these converging issues could be fully considered (by a sub-group of *An Bord Rialaithe*) and their implications for the College identified prior to completion. It was also agreed that with the commencement of a new College President taking place in October 2011, the final shape of the plan should have input from the new President.

The sequence of stages in the strategic planning process took place as follows:

July-Aug 2008	Review & Analysis
October 2008	Strategic framework presented to <i>An Bord Rialaithe</i>
Oct-Jan 2008	Consultation with College community (Phase 1)
March 2009	First draft presented to <i>An Bord Rialaithe</i>
April-Sept 2009	Consultation with College community (Phase 2)
Sept-Jan 2010	Sub-Group of <i>An Bord Rialaithe</i> refines the plan
March 2010	Second draft approved by <i>An Bord Rialaithe</i> for external consultation
Sept-Nov 2010	External consultation
January 2011	Sub-Group of <i>An Bord Rialaithe</i> appointed to consider emerging strategic considerations
Oct-Dec 2012	Commencement of new College President and adoption by <i>An Bord Rialaithe</i> of the seven underlying pillars of the Strategic Plan
March 2012	Final draft of the Strategic Plan presented to <i>An Bord Rialaithe</i> and adopted

6.2 | Implementation

It is intended by *An Bord Rialaithe* that the Strategic Plan, and the goals and targets set out herein, will inform the adoption of annual Action Plans that will be implemented during each of the five consecutive Academic Years during the term of the Strategic Plan (2012-2016).

The annual Action Plans will be more detailed, and will feature delivery strategies, roles and responsibilities, input data, actions to be implemented, output data, and outcomes. Outcomes will be measured against agreed success indicators that will be aligned with universal KPIs expected to be introduced for the higher education sector in 2012.

The implementation process will be overseen by a monitoring group which will submit quarterly reports to *An Bord Rialaithe*.

Our reporting process will be transparent and outputs and outcomes will be published in our institutional Annual Reports as well as forming the basis for reporting to funding bodies.



APPENDIX A KEY ISSUES DISTILLED FROM INTERNAL CONSULTATION PROCESS¹

Academic programmes – review and revise current provision; relevance to market (and community)

Access / accessibility – compliance imperatives but also internal mainstreaming issues; targeting; pre-entry preparation

Aesthetics – the “look” of the campus / facilities / remove enclosed “feel”

Buildings – dialogue with staff about new buildings, space, student numbers, usage

Career’s Office – to be established

Catholic Ethos – requires expression within the body of the strategy grid.

Centres, schools etc – Research / Language / “anchoring” of Social Justice initiatives

Communication – internal and external; trust and respect - reciprocity

Coordination & Integration – horizontal and vertical; ‘wider participation’

Decision-making – inclusive, transparent, devolved where possible, efficiency of communication and execution, trust

Delivery (of programmes) – flexibility, ICTs, outreach, community context, enhanced targeting, collaboration with external actors, challenge of working outside normal hours, credits and blended learning Departments identity / clustering / administrative support

Diversity – seeking diversity actively as well as inclusiveness

Environment – work environment (human and physical resources) as well as care of the earth imperatives

External Relations – partnerships / national and international / internationalisation / academic mobility and conferences

Faculties – enhanced interaction and opportunities for collaborative programme delivery

Image – branding and corporate identity

Library – space, resources and ancillary services

Life-long learning

¹Non-weighted, alphabetical listing, presented to *An Bord Rialaithe*, March 20, 2009

Management – about giving leadership

Modularisation – *Inter*-institutional synergies

Modularisation / hybridisation / *intra*-institutional synergies

Policy (external) – alignment where appropriate but critical engagement and leadership

Policy (internal) – enhance communication and effectiveness of policy development

Postgraduate Studies – target for enhancement, especially development of Graduate School

Resources – funding, initiatives; resources required; staffing

Revenue – facilities etc.

Social Integration – staff / students/ sectional

Social Justice – commitment to social justice and equity needs to be articulated more effectively externally and MIC currency in this area asserted / integration with syllabus / cohesion (anchored)

Staff-Student Ratio

Student-centred – “community of learners and learning” includes staff; range of supports required for students

Teaching & Learning ... cannot be de-coupled from research – and vice versa.

APPENDIX B EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS CONSULTED

Maria Kelly	CEO, Limerick Chamber of Commerce	Susan Frawley	St. Michael's Infant Sch.
Laura Ryan	Limerick Coordination Office	Pat Lyons	Maria King
Eamon Ryan	CEO, Limerick Enterprise Board	D. Ó Murchú	An Mhodhscoil
Vincent Cunnane	CEO, Shannon Development	Brian Mangan	Sc. Mháthair Dé
Liam McElligott	Limerick Enterprise Development Park	Helen McInerney	Limerick School Project
George Lee	Limerick Enterprise Development Park	Thomas Browne	Milford NS
Don Barry	President, University of Limerick	Stiofán Ó Cathail	Scoil Neasán Naofa
Michael Carmody	President, Institute of Technology Tralee	C. Crowe	Patrickswell N.S.
Maria Hinfelaar	President, Limerick Institute of Technology	D. Leahy	Sc. an Spioraid Naomh
Rhona McCormack	Manager, Limerick Downtown Centre	P.J. FitzPatrick	Sc. Seanáin Naofa
Ruth Bourke	Manager Ennis Regional Learning Centre	M. Mc Niece	Parteen N.S.
Jennifer Moroney	Ward Manager, Northside Learning Hub	Sally O'Neill	St. Senan's N.S.
Michael Cregan	Laurel Hill Secondary School	G. Loughnane	St. Aidan's N.S.
Padraig O' Broin	Laurel Hill Coláiste	J. Walsh	St. Tola's N.S.
Pat O' Brien	St. Endas Community School	Peter Walsh	St. Conaire's N.S.
Bríd de Brún	Árdscoil Rís	G. Stack Ennis	N.S., Kilrush Rd.
Bridget O'Connell	Salesian Secondary School	P. Hanrahan	Sc. Chríost Rí, Cloughleigh
Colette McGrath	Ardscoil Mhuire	Betty O'Riordan	Holy Family Junior N.S.
Nicholas Cuddihy	Crescent Comprehensive College	Liam de Róiste	Ennis C.B.S.
Sheila Conneely	Scoil Carmel	Cooney Holy	Family Senior,
Kathryn O'Connor	St. Gabriels School	Sean O'Confhaola	Ennis Educate Together
Charles Irwin	St. Munchin's College	Pauline McGrath	O'Callaghan Mills N.S.
Kay Barry	Catherine McAuley School	Sean Hehir	Kilkishen N.S.
Margaret McMahon	St. Nessans Community College	Seamus	Leamy Clarecastle N.S.
Noel Earlie	CBS Secondary School	Sharon Dilger	Doora N.S.
Ted O'Mahony	Limerick School for the Deaf	A. McMahan	Scoil na Maighdine N.S.
Thomas S. Hardy	Villiers School	M. Kilmartin	Clonmoney N.S.
Vincent Foley	St. Clement's College	Jody O'Connor	Cratloe N.S.
Martin Wallace	Castletroy College	D. Ó Gréachan	Sc Mhuire
Donnachadh Ó Treasaigh	Gaelcholaiste Luimnigh	Ray McInerney	Sixmilebridge N.S.
Sile Killeen	Sc.Mhuire Banríon na hÉireann (C)	Kathleen O'Donnell	Donoughmore N.S.
M. O'Kelly	Sc. Chríost Rí, (B)	Marian Nestor	Convent P.S.
W. Reidy	Sc. Chuimhneachain JFK	Michael Gleeson	Killaloe Boys N.S.
Mary Brick	Sc. Chroí Ró Naofa Iosa	M. Drew	O'Briensbridge N.S.
Sarah O'Rourke	Sc. Maria Auxiliatrix Bunscoil	M. O'Sullivan	Ballina N.S.
Michael Condon	Sc. Mhainchín Naofa (Boys)	P. Kennedy	Lisnagry N.S.
Ms. Linda Scully	Sc. Mhainchín Naofa (Girls)	Derbhile de Paor	Castleconnell N.S.
Ms. Chris Deely	St. Lelias N.S.	M. Lynch	Sc. Naomh Iosaf
Aine Bn Uí Chroimín	Corpus Christi N.S.	A McKenna	Creora N.S.
Peter Long	Sc. Ide	Barry O'Riordan	Adare Boys
Rosemary Mangan	Sc. Mhuire (C),	Mary Lavin	Adare Girls
Geraldine Wallace	St. Mary's Junior Boys N.S.	M O'Brien	tSeantsráid, Adare
John Tuohy	Sc. Phóil Naofa	Cyril Madigan	St. James School, Cappagh
Francis Quaid	Our Lady of Lourdes	Nora Naughton	Askeaton Junior N.S.
R. Grogan	Sc. Mhuire Banríon na Siochána	Liam Hernon	Askeaton Senior N.S.
Marian Tobin	Southill Junior School	Liam O'Brien	Christ the Saviour NS.
Kevin Haugh	Galvone N.S.	Mary O'Kelly	Croagh N.S.
Bernadette Mee	Sc. Mhóin-a-Lín	Sr. Madeline Ní Dheá	St. Joseph's School
Róisín Bn Uí Chúrnáin	Sc. Phádraig Naofa (B)	Nora Ryan	St. Joseph's Convent
Donal O'Gorman	Sc. Phádraig Naofa (C)	Rena Cullane	Courtenay N.S.
Betty Farrell	Sc. Bhride	Marie Hilliard	Sc. Áine Naofa
M. O'Gorman	Sc. Eoin Naofa	T. Wrenn	Foynes N.S.
Seamus Long	St. John the Baptist Boys N.S.	M. Moore	Scoil Naomh Mhuire
Patrick Hanley	Sc. Iosagáin	M Crowley	Ardagh N.S.

The Principal	Fitzgerald Kildimo N.S.	Pat Dowling	Limerick City Council
Máire Uí Cheallacháin	Sc. Náisiúnta	Tom Mackey	City Manager
Niamh Ambrose	Knockea N.S.		County Manager
P. Enright	Oola, N.S.		County Manager
Sean Hogg	Caherconlish		County Manager
M. Foley	Convent of Mercy		County Manager
Eamonn Coffey	Boys Senior N.S.	Brendan Lyons	OLOL CSG
Sr. Claire Gunning	St. Joseph's School	Brendan Kenny	CEO Limerick Regeneration
S. Moloney	Tipperary GNS	Declan Blackett	Limerick Regeneration
Ann Tierney	Tipperary Jnr. B.N.S.	Neil Haran	SIE
John Martin	St. Mary's Jnr. B.N.S.	City of Learning Group	
Noreen Spain	St. Mary's N.S.	PAUL Partnership	
Gerry Ryan	CBS Nenagh Senior School	Jimmy Prior	FRC Southill
M. Gleeson	Scoil Mhaithair Dé	Joan Keehan	LCEN
Liz Kiely	Ahane N.S.	Doras Luimni	Mt. St. Alphonsus Redemptorists South Circular Road
Joe Ryan	Shanagolden N.S.		City Hall, Merchants Quay
Máirín Ní Dhuinneacha	Gaelscoil Mhichil Chiosog	Limerick City Childcare Committee	
M. Ní Fhathárta	Gaelscoil Raithin	Limerick Community and Voluntary Forum	c/o PAUL Partnership Unit 25a, Tait Business Centre
Ríona De Liostúin	Gaelscoil Sairseál	Limerick Social Services Centre	Henry Street
James Murphy	Croom National School	Limerick City Sports Partnership	2 Church Street, St Johns Square
The Principal	Knocklong National School	Southill Action Centre	Southill House, Roxboro Road
Tom Bulfin	Bruff National School	Southill Community Development Project Ltd.	266 Avondale Court, O'Malley Park
The Principal	Scoil Mochealleg	Southill Family	267-268 Avondale Court Resource Centre
Brendan Moloney	Hospital National School	O'Malley Park, Southill	
The Principal	Kilfinnane National School	St Mary's Community	44 Nicholas Street Action Centre
The Principal	Cappamore BNS.	St Mary's Community	5 Verdent Crescent, Kings Island Development Project
Breda Deedigan	Manager, St. Enda's Sports Complex	St. Munchin's Community	Kileely Court, Thomondgate Action Centre
Joe O'Connell	Director of Limerick Education Office	St. Munchin's Community	Kileely Court, Thomondgate Development Project
Very Rev. Tony Mullins	Administrator, Limerick Diocese	St. Munchin's Family	Clonconnane Road, Ballynanty Resource Centre
Most Rev. Dr. Donal Murray		Our Lady of Lourdes Community Development Project	49 Clarina Court, Ballinacurra Weston
Cllr Maria Byrne	Mayor of Limerick	Catherine McAuley School	Ashbourne Avenue, South Circular Road
Sheila Nunan	INTO	Early School Leavers Initiative School Completion Programme	C/O Our Lady of Lourdes Primary School Rosbrien
Dipti Pandya	IRCHSS	FOCUS Ireland	Parnell Place, Parnell Street
Anne Looney	NCCA	Limerick Community Board Educational Initiative (LCBEI)	Unit 9 Limerick Enterprise Development Park, Roxboro
Mary Coughlin TD	Minister for Education & Science	Moyross Action Centre	C/O Moyross Community Enterprise Centre Moyross
Aine Lawlor	Teaching Council	The Carers Association	Unit 1 Steamboat Quay Dock Road (www.carersireland.com)
VEC	Limerick City	St. Gabriel's School	Springfield Road, Dooradoyle
VEC	County Limerick		
VEC	County Clare		
Tom Boland	HEA		
Mary-Liz Trant	HEA		
Union of Students in Ireland			
IFUT			
IMPACT			
SIPTU			
Students Union of Ireland			
IGC			
Ann Scully	Chairperson, Doras Lumini		
Dara O'Brien	Limerick City Childcare Committee		
Juan Carlos Azzopardi	Community Development Network Moyross		
Ms Patrica Sheehan	Dept. of Education & Science, Punch's Cross		
Sinead Doody	RAPID Coordinator		





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