



COLÁISTE CHEATHARLACH
NAOMH PÁDRAIG
CARLOW COLLEGE
ST. PATRICK'S

Carlow College, St. Patrick's

STRATEGIC PLAN 2023 - 2028

Table of Contents

Section	Contents	Page No.
1.0	Introduction	3
2.0	Strategic Road Map	4
3.0	Vision, Mission, Values	5
4.0	Strategic Objectives	6
	<i>Objective 1: Teaching and Learning</i>	6
	<i>Objective 2: College as Community</i>	7
	<i>Objective 3: Marketing and Student Recruitment</i>	9
	<i>Objective 4: Information and Data Management Systems</i>	9
	<i>Objective 5: Governance and Organisational Structure</i>	10
	<i>Objective 6: Collaborations and Partnerships</i>	11
	<i>Objective 7: Environment and Sustainability</i>	12

1.0 Introduction

Carlow College, St. Patrick's was founded in 1782 and had its first admissions in 1793. The College's Strategic Plan 2023 – 2028 sets the course for the College for the next five years and is built on the 2017 -2022 plan which was the result of a consultative process involving a College staff listening exercise along with input from external stakeholders and members of the local community.

The Strategic Plan 2023 - 2028 builds on our history as a College of Teaching and Research in the Humanities and Social Care. We are proud of our Catholic tradition and ethos and we are committed to social inclusion and equality of access to higher education. Carlow College St. Patrick's will continue to deliver third level education based on our long-standing principles.

We will maintain the highest levels of academic achievement by supporting the individual learner's educational, professional and personal development.

We will educate and train skilled graduates who will demonstrate flexibility, critical and analytical thinking, cultural awareness, creativity and effective communications skills.

We will promote learner engagement within the College and wider community.

We will engage with diverse groups, communities and individuals to encourage and provide opportunities for wider access and participation in Higher Education.

We will strengthen our local, regional, national and international reputation and work strategically with established and new partners to enhance the profile of third level education in Carlow.

Our strengths include a highly qualified teaching and research staff, a dedicated support staff and a student focussed environment. We maintain a positive student-staff ratios, a focus on high student retention rates and strong collaborative working relationships with our partners. Our heritage buildings and town-centre campus also hosts the renowned VISUAL Centre of Contemporary Art & The George Bernard Shaw Theatre.

This Strategic Plan outlines our commitment to ensuring a positive future for Carlow College, St. Patrick's and our alignment with Government direction on Higher Education in Ireland.

2.0 Strategic Road Map:

Integration:

The Government's **National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030** (*Department of Education and Skills, 2011*) sets out a number of key areas for third level education in Ireland. These are framed in the context of higher education in a changing society and planning for future expanding demands.

The Report of the Strategy Group (2011) outlines a mission for higher education in Ireland in relation to the three core roles of teaching and learning, research and engagement with wider society. It also identifies the requirement for internationalising higher education to increase collaboration and movement of students and staff.

Carlow College St. Patrick's has long recognised the principles identified in the report and has integrated these into the development of this Strategic Plan. CCSP is acutely aware also of the recommendation that - *smaller publically funded institutions, that are not institutes of technology or universities, should be encouraged to align with or be incorporated into institutions of sufficient scale to enable overall quality and efficiency objectives to be met*. Strategically for Carlow College St. Patrick's this means integration with one of the larger institutions in the country.

Since 2017, as recommended by the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (previously Department of Education and Skills) and the HEA and in keeping with the government's policy of regionalisation, the logical strategy for Carlow College, St. Patrick's is integration into the third level sector in the south east region. For Carlow College, St. Patrick's, this means integration into South East Technological University (SETU) which was established in 2022. The College has begun the process with SETU to establish the steps required to progress this integration. The College enjoys political and departmental support for this integration.

Whilst a clear direction of integration for the College has been identified, the vision, mission, values and objectives of the institute to provide the highest level of third level education remain unwavering. These will continue to ensure that Carlow College St. Patrick's is best positioned to face all challenges and opportunities over the next 5 years.

3.0 Vision, Mission, Values:

Vision:

Carlow College, St Patrick's will educate, engage and inspire its students through the provision of transformational learning and teaching experiences; it will enable a diverse student and graduate population to achieve both their academic and career potential and will enable them to contribute to the development of society at local, national and global levels.

Mission:

In the shared enterprise of education, through teaching, learning, practice placement and research activity, Carlow College, St. Patrick's prizes excellence in all it does and endeavours to respond creatively to the changing needs of its students, of potential employers and of society.

Core Values:

The core values of Carlow College, St Patrick's are its guiding principles and are built on our heritage as a Catholic higher education institution. They inform our day-to-day pursuit of excellence in teaching and learning. The integrated College learning experience includes formal classroom instruction, critical engagement with ideas, and exploration of links between theory, professional practice and lived experience. This develops the students' capacity for academic excellence, leadership, social justice, career development and scholarship.

- **Truth and Integrity**– We aim to create a research-led teaching and learning environment that is interdisciplinary in nature, that inspires openness to new ideas and critical thinking and that is ethical in practice.
- **Respect and Justice**– We recognise the diversity of our College community and seek to promote actively a spirit of inclusiveness, mutual respect and equality of opportunity and access.
- **Collaboration and Social Awareness** – By creating opportunities to work together, both internally and externally, we believe that collaboration and partnership can best contribute to the ethical development of local, national and global communities and society.
- **Friendliness and Service** – We are committed to maintaining a hospitable, student-centred environment that recognises each student's individual learning journey, and that promotes, values and supports their personal, social and cultural development.

- **Creativity and Innovation** – We believe that learning is about being open to new ideas and possibilities both in what we learn and in how we learn. We are committed to being an educational space, which promotes creativity and innovation as a way of responding to the contemporary world.

4.0 Strategic Objectives

Objective 1: Teaching and Learning

To engage and inspire through the quality of our transformational learning and teaching experiences

We are a provider of high quality third level education that is inclusive of students from a variety of backgrounds and abilities. Our emphasis is on enabling all students to engage with course content and achieve their educational goals. This approach leads to positive external regulatory reviews, high student retention, progress and attainment throughout all degree Programmes.

We aim to maintain and develop these strengths through a consistent focus on the development of transformational learning and teaching experiences and our commitment to developing student knowledge, creativity and employability skills.

We will ensure a continued programme of quality improvement for curriculum design and delivery in line with the College's *Programme Development Strategy*, practice-based learning and the overall learning and teaching environment which is underpinned by the quality of our research-led teaching staff.

Goals:

- We will implement a Learning and Teaching Strategy that is regularly reviewed and monitored for its impact and effectiveness, encouraging student and staff engagement and achievement in research and teaching.
- We will build on our current range of programmes and seek opportunities to establish new course offerings at all higher education levels. We will seek strategic partnerships with organisations to produce a diverse and relevant suite of vocational support and professional development courses.
- We will promote module flexibility and ensure that our degree programmes are structured to allow for the expansion of module options that include opportunities for learning outside the lecture room. This is in line with professional guidelines and graduate employability skills and experience.
- Building on our high PhD-qualified lecturer/student ratio, the College is committed to promoting post-doctoral research, publication and advanced professional training by academic staff through clear support mechanisms.

- The College's *Research Hub* will continue to support research and to foster openness to new ideas, to build civic engagement and social awareness, and promote creativity and innovation, in alignment with national and international research interests.
- We will continue to prioritise graduate employability through engagement with professional placement agencies and relevant professional regulatory authorities and by embedding employability skills and practice in all undergraduate programmes to ensure that our programmes remain responsive to regional and national skills needs.

Objective 2: College as Community

To enable our diverse students and graduates to achieve their academic, personal and career potential.

Recognising the integral role of all staff in building the reputation of the College and impacting on the student experience, we seek to build our College community based on a culture of mutual respect, inclusion, support for professional development, a student-centred focus and a commitment to quality and excellence in all that we do.

Goals

Our Students:

- Recognising diversity and supporting well-being and achievement throughout the student journey, we will continue to provide holistic, integrated and professional student-centred support services to help students settle, stay and succeed at College, working within an engaged teaching and learning environment.
- Our Academic Resource Office will continue to co-ordinate, develop and deliver a range of academic and disability-related supports to assist students in achieving their potential through the development of key academic skills.
- Our campus-based counselling, health and chaplaincy services will support student wellbeing and personal development from the first days through to graduation by working in collaboration with colleagues, local practitioners and community groups.
- Our Careers Service will continue to provide all students and recent graduates with professional career management and job search support, offering a co-curricular approach to graduate employability skills development.

- We will implement a Student Engagement and Success Strategy that focuses on the student lifecycle and a holistic, whole of institution approach to supporting success.
- We will develop a comprehensive employability strategy, building on an informed curriculum, experiential learning through work placements, community engagement and extra-curricular activities. This will be supported by developing strong relationships with our alumni and opportunity providers.
- Student representation and engagement will continue to be actively sought, encouraged, valued and influential. Student input and feedback will continue to inform all aspects of College life from induction through to graduation.
- We will work to improve student access to, and engagement with, sporting activities.

Our Staff:

We will work together as a confident and co-operative team, sharing the same values and focus on personal and professional development, working individually, collaboratively and in partnerships to ensure the successful achievement of all College objectives.

We are committed to developing and promoting the College as a welcoming, friendly, hospitable and inclusive place for all staff, creating a working environment that is based on mutual respect, transparent and timely communication, collaboration, continual quality improvement, equitable practices, effective leadership and clear accountability.

- HR strategy will promote investment in people through the staff appraisal system, support for staff development and compliance with agreed regulations and policy.
- Staff well-being will continue to be a key objective of the College. We will continue to provide external professional support including counselling and health-related information, advice and support for all staff, as required.
- We will ensure processes and procedures are in place to enable all staff to provide input and feedback into strategic developments on a regular basis.
- Focusing on the staff experience and satisfaction, we will provide regular opportunities to encourage staff feedback and inform future activities.
- We will endeavour to enhance the staff experience of the College as a positive workplace through the provision of communications, infrastructure, collaboration, networking and social opportunities.

- We will develop, review and monitor the effectiveness of internal staff communication systems, e.g. regular staff briefings and a staff portal for sharing information and promoting the 'College as Community' ethos.
- We will continue to work with the recognised College union to promote a collaborative, transparent and safe ethos in the college.

Objective 3: Marketing and Student Recruitment

To enhance the College's reputation and reach and to increase student numbers through an integrated approach to marketing and student recruitment.

Goals:

- A strategy focussing on all aspects of internal and external marketing will promote the College as a centre of teaching and learning excellence.
- We will promote the College campus as a major town-centre community resource by developing and extending our range of public-access activities, exhibitions, conferences, research collaborations and entertainment events in line with agreed strategic objectives.
- Building on our long tradition of inclusion, equality of access and respect for diversity, we will actively promote and market our Programmes and modules to a wide range of learners, using innovative marketing techniques and student recruitment strategies and by focusing on increased brand awareness, effectiveness and take-up of opportunities.
- Our Student Recruitment marketing material will reflect our strong focus on graduate employability, intellectual, personal and professional development, making explicit reference to likely academic and professional career pathways.
- We will engage with students and graduates to ensure their narratives are captured in our marketing material, utilising their individual experience of the College and subsequent graduate career pathways.
- Utilising evidence-based research and analytics on emerging student markets and predicted growth subjects, we will target recruitment activities at key groups to support an identified growth strategy, aiming to increase our overall student numbers by annually reviewed, planned and agreed targets.

- Our Marketing will seek to expand our international focus and develop new avenues of international student access to Carlow College.

Objective 4: Information and Data Management Systems

To develop a reliable information and data management system, with analytics and resources to inform improved teaching and learning experiences, enhanced communication, improved administrative processes, and an evidence-base for strategic planning and continued development robust quality assurance.

Goals:

- We will develop systems for the management of all records created and kept by our staff. Records management is the application of documented policies and procedures to the creation, maintenance, use and disposal of records. Vital records and those which merit permanent retention as archives will be identified and archived according to quality assurance and data protection policies.
- Records management systems will apply to records in all formats, including paper and digital records. Our records management systems will support the College's functions and strategic decision-making, and will comply with legislation, regulations and best practice.
- We will ensure that a robust 'learner information management system' is in place that is comprehensive, transparent and compatible with external regulatory, professional and national systems as appropriate.
- We will continue to invest in our information technology infrastructure to ensure that it is fit-for-purpose and can support interactive learning and teaching opportunities for all students and staff.
- Priority is placed on the security of all data to ensure availability, confidentiality and integrity of data while being stored, processed and transmitted through the College network.

Objective 5: Governance and Organisational Structure

To develop and refine organisational structures and processes that combine to shape institutional activity that is strategic and responsive to achieving College goals.

The College recognises that the increased complexity of institutional functions, changing student demographics, demands for entrepreneurial behaviour,

technological innovations and increases in external stakeholder interactions requires dynamic and functional organisational structures and processes.

Goals:

- We will monitor the effectiveness of our organisational structure and processes to respond to the fast-changing environment, with particular focus on the decision-making and planning functions.
- We will maintain a regularly updated “organogram” which will outline key areas of accountability, roles and line management functions.
- We will continue to develop robust Quality Assurance procedures to inform and support our Governance and organisational structures with a strong focus on best practice in regulatory compliance, self-reflection, evaluation and impact.
- All strategic targets will have built-in mechanisms for monitoring their effectiveness, with scheduled evidence-based reviews that draw on the lived teaching and learning experience at the College.
- We will ensure that our organisational structures and processes are transparent, and allow opportunities and mechanisms for input from all staff.

Objective 6: Collaborations and Partnerships

To consolidate and develop our collaborative relationships and to engage with local, regional and international partners in planned projects and events that contribute to the educational, cultural, social and economic life of our local and regional communities and the wider national and international society.

As a smaller third level institution with a strong specialism in Arts and Humanities based programmes, we will continue to seek collaborations with academic and non-academic partners to achieve knowledge-based goals of benefit to wider society and to foster a sense of civic responsibility within the College community. Building on our extensive links with local non-academic partners, we will explore further opportunities for developing collaborative projects. We will strengthen our working relationship with Carlow Local Authority, Carlow County Development Partnership, Carlow Local Community Development Committee, Carlow Local Enterprise Office and Carlow Kilkenny Education and Training Board to promote Higher Education in Carlow in line with County Carlow Local Economic and Community Plan.

We are committed to our collaborative work with statutory organisations such as TUSLA and the HSE and to our ongoing partnership arrangements with over 200

professional Social Care agencies in the region and numerous schools that offer practice placements to our students.

Goals

- Collaborate with the South East Technological University in creating and promoting local synergies in education for the benefit of our communities.
- Create and facilitate opportunities for collaboration and partnership through the College's *Civic Engagement Hub*, which contribute to the ethical development of local, national and global communities and society.
- Develop collaborations and partnerships that increase the College's position as a College of the Humanities and Social Studies.
- Develop and strengthen the existing partnership with VISUAL to include a mutually beneficial base of creative arts and theatre education and training programmes at certificate, B.A. and other relevant levels.
- Develop our focus on international academic partnerships and enhance the profile of Carlow College, St Patrick's through greater collaboration with existing and potential international partners.
- Develop capacity in the International Office to recruit full-time degree seeking students, semester student-abroad learners and design short-term summer programmes.
- Build on the significant progress that has already been achieved in collaboratively developing education and training modules with a variety of local partners including Therapeutic Foster Care with TUSLA, Supervision Training with Social Care Placement Agencies, Community Development projects with CCDP and Visual, "Gateway" links programmes with CIFE.
- Build on existing links with non-academic partners such as Carlow Museum, Carlow Library and Carlow Tourism in the areas of local history and heritage.

Objective 7: Environment and Sustainability

The College campus benefits significantly from both its exceptional physical structure and its town-centre location. Since 1990 a significant building and renovation programme has seen the development of 21st century facilities sympathetic to this renowned heritage site.

The College is committed to further development in line with strategic objectives through the development of a high-quality campus that is environmentally

sustainable, enhancing the teaching, learning, socialising and living experience of students, staff and visitors.

Goals

- To develop a Campus and Estate Strategy that co-ordinates the relationship between space and use, and reflects staff and student experience and input.
- To continue the building and renovation programme, as an integral part of the campus and estate strategy, ensuring fit-for-purpose teaching, learning, accommodation and service spaces.
- To promote the campus as a welcoming, accessible, local, regional, national and international centre for cultural, social and educational activities and to develop the potential of the College as a venue for one day and residential academic conferences.
- Build on current joint and complementary projects and optimise the potential for further cultural enrichment with the world-class VISUAL arts centre, located within the grounds of our town-centre campus.
- To contribute to staff, student and local community well-being through the promotion of institutional responsibility towards focussing on a healthier, more sustainable and green campus environment.
- To continue to ensure compliance with key regulations including accessibility and Health and Safety.
- To promote and actualise the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals in the campus' physical, educational and social spheres.