



**CARLOW
COLLEGE**
ST. PATRICK'S

Carlow College, St. Patrick's

STRATEGIC PLAN 2017 - 2022

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1.0 Introduction

Carlow College, St. Patrick's, Ireland's oldest third level Catholic College was founded in 1782 and had its first admissions in 1793. The College's *Strategic Plan 2017 – 2022* sets the course for the College for the next five years and is 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 College's Strategic Plan will set us on the path to new possibilities, internally and externally, and will help us develop educational alliances at home and abroad. The Strategic Plan is both broad and deep in its goals and its initiatives which will be implemented in stages, with some initiatives already underway.

The *Strategic Plan 2017 – 2022* builds on our distinguished history as a College of Teaching and Research in the Humanities. We are proud of our Catholic tradition and ethos and we re-affirm our commitment to social inclusion and equality of access to higher education. We will maintain the highest levels of academic attainment and achievement by supporting the individual learner's educational, professional and personal development. Our Humanities and Social Science disciplines will continue to educate and train skilled graduates who will demonstrate flexibility, critical and analytical thinking, cultural awareness, creativity and effective communications skills. We will continue to promote learner engagement within the college and wider community.

Our integrated College strategies, which are grounded in our core values and captured in our Mission Statement, support our objectives. We will continue to engage with diverse groups, communities and individuals to encourage and provide opportunities for wider access and participation in Higher Education.

The *Strategic Plan 2017 – 2022* looks forward to the next five years, building on our impressive achievements and optimising our strengths. Our strengths include having a highly-qualified teaching and research staff who underpin our innovative degree Programmes, a dedicated support staff, a warm nurturing student focussed environment, positive student-staff ratios, a high student retention rate, strong collaborative working relationships and a strengthening partnership with Trinity College, the University of Dublin (TCD). Our heritage buildings and an impressive town-centre campus also hosts the renowned VISUAL Creative Arts Centre.

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 in line with the County Carlow 2021 Local Economic and Community Plan. Central to these aims is to achieve growth in scale and scope.

This Strategic Plan outlines our commitment to ensuring a positive future for Carlow College, St. Patrick's. We are a Catholic higher education institution with momentum and we will prioritise our next steps. The current budget climate is challenging, but we will continue to move forward, change and grow.

2.0 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 their academic and career potential and 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 rich 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, 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.

Our core values are:

- **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 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.

3.0 Strategic Objectives

Objective 1: Teaching and Learning

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

We are recognised as 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 has led 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 focus on an integrated continual quality improvement programme for curriculum design and delivery, practice-based learning and the overall teaching and learning environment, underpinned by the quality of our highly-qualified research-led teaching staff.

Goals:

- We will develop and implement a Teaching and Learning Strategy that is regularly reviewed and monitored for its impact and effectiveness, encouraging and inspiring 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. In addition, we will actively seek strategic partnerships with organisations and industry to produce a diverse and relevant suite of vocational support and professional development courses. In this we look to increase the scale and scope of our course offerings.
- 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 best practice professional guidelines and our commitment to developing 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.
- We will continue to prioritise graduate employability through engagement with professional placement agencies and relevant professional regulatory authorities to ensure that our programmes remain relevant and innovative.

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, support for professional development, student-centred focus and commitment to quality and excellence in all that we do.

With one of the highest student retention and attainment rates in the country, we will continue to build on this exemplary success and extend our focus on the transition from College to graduate destinations.

Our students:

Goals:

- Recognising diversity and supporting well-being and achievement throughout the student journey, we will continue to provide holistic, 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 professional and peer support activities to assist students in achieving their potential through the development of key academic skills.
- Our campus-based Health & Wellbeing and Chaplaincy services will support student welfare 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 develop a comprehensive Employability Strategy, building on an informed curriculum, experiential learning through work placements, community engagement and extra-curricular activities and developing strong relationships with our alumni and opportunity providers.
- Student representation will continue to be actively sought, encouraged, valued and influential. Student input 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:

Goals:

- *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.
- We will develop, monitor and review the impact of a new Human Resources Strategy. Focussing on all aspects of HR management, the HR Strategy will also 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 embed processes and procedures 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 improved communications, infrastructure, collaboration, networking and social opportunities.
- We will develop, review and monitor the effectiveness of internal staff communication systems, e.g.: regular Staff newsletters and a staff portal for sharing information and promoting the 'College as Community' ethos.

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:

- We will develop, monitor and review the impact of a new Marketing and Student Recruitment Strategy to deliver an integrated approach to both functions. Focussing on all aspects of internal and external marketing, the strategy 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. We are committed to supporting graduates with their professional and academic development through the provision of Diploma Supplement.
- 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, working strategically with Carlow County Council and in neighbourly co-operation with Carlow IT to enhance the local, regional, national and international profile of Carlow as a third level education study abroad destination.

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 review and invest in our current information technology infrastructure to ensure that it is fit-for-purpose and can support interactive learning and teaching opportunities for all students and staff.
- We will review and enhance the PJ Brophy Memorial Library as a key teaching and learning resource and explore opportunities to widen access.
- 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.

- Records management systems will apply to records in all formats, including paper and digital records. Our records management systems will ensure the creation and effective administration of complete, usable and reliable records, which are capable of supporting 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 or national systems as appropriate.
- 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 will challenge existing organisational structures and processes.

Goals:

- We will review and 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.
- Building on our recent review of governance structures, and in line with current codes of practice for good governance, an expanded Board of Trustees has been appointed, with clearly defined responsibilities, roles and functions.
- Taking action based on recent staff input regarding a review of college internal organisational structure, we will provide a written response within an agreed timeframe including a revised and 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.

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.

In the context of the *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 - Report of the Strategy Group* (The Hunt Report, 2011), a core element of College strategy is to consolidate its academic links with TCD. Whilst remaining committed to retaining our institutional identity, we recognise the benefits of collaboration with a larger institution. Our work with TCD is seen as complementing our existing long-established international links with colleges from the United States.

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 (already resulting in the design and delivery of bespoke training courses) 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

- To build on the ongoing successful collaborations and initiatives with Trinity College, the University of Dublin, we will continue to organise and present joint conferences, seminars, training opportunities as well as creative events and exhibitions that resonate with local and regional needs and that support TCD's stated objective of continuing joint activities with Carlow College, St Patrick's in the humanities and social sciences (Trinity College, the University of Dublin Strategic Plan 2014-2019, Objective 5, Developing Valuable Partnerships, p.45).
- We will collaborate with IT Carlow in creating and promoting local synergies in education for the benefit of our communities.
- To develop collaborations and partnerships which increase the College's position as a College of the Humanities and Social Studies serving the Province of Leinster and the island of Ireland.
- To 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, based on evidence-led market research and clear strategic business planning.

- To review and develop our focus on international academic partnerships and enhance the profile of Carlow College, St Patrick's through greater collaboration with existing and potential affiliates in the United States.
- To promote greater opportunities for students through study abroad exchanges (e.g. the Erasmus Programme), short-term faculty led opportunities and practice placements.
- To develop capacity in the International Office to not only recruit semester student-abroad learners, but also develop short-term summer programmes and the recruitment of full-time degree seeking students.
- To 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, Journalism modules with the Nationalist Newspaper Group, Supervision Training with Social Care Placement Agencies, Community Development projects with CCDP and Visual, "Gateway" links programmes with CIFE.
- To 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 within an agreed timeframe, that reviews and 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.