

The Saint Mary's Rebrand, Continued

A Brand User's Q&A

Since we shared the most recent information about the rebrand and its rollout in an earlier Cardinal Update this month, the MarComm team has received some great questions, some of which have led to small changes in a few of the brand visuals. Thank you for your questions, your continued support, and your brand advocacy! And, please, keep them coming. Send your questions and comments to [Lisa Guyott](#), associate vice president, marketing and communication.

1. Why are we rebranding the university?

A strong brand impacts reputation and lifts all marketing and sales efforts. Brand messaging through all channels (e.g. recruiting communications, advertising, public relations, sponsorships, events, partnerships, thought leadership, web communications, etc.) creates awareness, interest and ultimately drives sales. In our case, it is intended to attract students to attend Saint Mary's.

We are focused on branding for many reasons:

- A relevant, relatable, and recognized brand will allow our story to cut through and **be heard in a noisy and competitive market.**
- Consistent and clear branding will explain and **establish Saint Mary's value in the minds of consumers** so when they are ready to make a decision about education, they understand our value, what the experience would be, and why Saint Mary's would be a good choice.
- **To support enrollment and giving** by building reputation, awareness, interest, engagement, and pride.
- **To optimize reach and communication effectiveness.** Best brands are known at a glance. You see a logo, a slogan, a message and you know right away what organization is sending the message. That is what we want to achieve by being clear, consistent, and compelling to our intended audiences.
- **To affirm our mission**, reason for being, who we serve, and why.
- **To build pride, and focus and unite staff, faculty, and students** across all campuses, departments, offices, and units.

2. Why do this now with all of the other changes happening (at the College)?

This is actually a strategic and excellent time to rebrand, an effort that began a year ago.

For many years, higher ed has faced several challenges and those have been exacerbated by the pandemic. Almost all schools, with the exception of the elites and top ranked state or selective universities, are impacted by declining enrollment since the pandemic with a significant enrollment cliff to come in a few years. The fact is we are, and will continue to be, competing for fewer students.

In fall 2022, 1.4 million fewer students enrolled as first-years in U.S. colleges and universities (National Student Clearinghouse). This is 400,000 more than the worst-case estimate made just a few months ago, in the spring of 2022. Additionally, fewer adult learners are choosing to continue their education in the face of inflation and recession. In simplest terms, we simply must make significant changes to attract more students to all our programs, undergraduate and adult.

A key benefit of Saint Mary's rebranding work is reaching new audiences. Honing our story, highlighting it, and sharing what is new and different will make people take notice. Rebranding generates energy and attention - needed in a massively cluttered marketplace where we want our messages to stand out and be seen and heard. Our competition is fierce, often with larger budgets that allow for greater reach. We intend to be as strategic, creative and data-driven as possible to make the most of our branding. We will be able to affirm our value to those who know us, and more importantly, establish the university as an attractive option with a personality that appeals to new audiences.

This new voice, look, and feel also signals that we are current - our programs, services, and approach is keeping up with the current and future educational needs of students.

The brand refresh is all about enhancing reputation and revenue. A strong brand increases students and student retention, benefactor activity, alumni pride, partnerships, supports hiring, etc.

3. What makes up a brand?

"Branding" includes everything we do with the intention of being recognized.

Brands are a combination of tangible and intangible elements:

- Visual design elements (i.e., logo, color, typography, images, tagline, packaging, etc.)
- Distinctive features (i.e. quality, design sensibility, personality, etc.)
- Intangible aspects of customers' experience with a product or company (i.e. reputation, customer experience, etc.)

The Saint Mary's brand is made up of everything that differentiates us from any competitor:

- Our name
- The words we use
- Our logo
- Our color palette
- Our pillars
- Our personality (as an institution and as individuals)
- Our voice - how we "speak" to our audiences
- Touch points with our audiences - website, advertising, publications, emails, voice mail, email signatures, etc.
- Our multimedia - content, quality, and tone

Together, these elements work individually and together to create a thought or evoke a feeling. It moves something to think about us beyond our offerings and connect in a deeper way.

4. Why did we change the logo?

A logo is the most visible expression of a brand. While each of us knows the most recognizable brands in the world (e.g. Coke, Apple, Google), we may very well NOT know how they came to be or what they really represent. Creating a new logo is typically a thoughtful and strategic process - research, competitive review, vision and mission reflection, etc. We went through the process in this strategic and intentional way. A logo can be viewed as just a graphic design but there is - or should be - a story that represents the brand. In Saint Mary's case, our new logo speaks to our brand position, mission, and attributes.

(Two examples: Apple's logo was conceived as Isaac Newton sitting beneath a tree with the apple hanging from it, poised to drop. As you know the logo is an apple today. So there is a story of how it came to be and one might wonder - how did a company known

for innovation, design, simplicity, life-enhancement decide a piece of fruit would be the best way to represent the brand. Nike - some think of it as a check mark but it represents the goddess of victory (Nicé) with associated attributes of speed, power, motivation, perseverance)

The new logo signals a change and commitment to a strong future while also demonstrating our long heritage.

- The new Saint Mary's logo is bold, sophisticated, and distinctive.
- It honors our past while it embraces the future
- It consciously has the look of a university with a strong legacy so is familiar to those looking at educational institutions (e.g. shield shape, curving lines of a book to celebrate a place of knowledge and learning).
- The imagery represents key elements yet simple and clean (hallmarks of good design). This is particularly critical in today's digital world, which is where the logo is most used.



The Lasallian Star is our north star, from it we navigate life with character and greater purpose.

5. Who was involved in the rebrand? How did we arrive at the final brand elements?

The entire university was involved in the rebrand in different ways. The Marketing and

Communication team has been working on this rebrand with a well-respected branding firm for over a year. We did significant research - qualitative and quantitative - and gathered feedback from current and prospective students, faculty, staff, and alumni.

The results of that work led to the brand design and message work, including the visual identity, our messaging, and our pillars.

A rebranding process inevitably leads to change because it emphasizes strong points, dispels misconceptions, highlights inconsistencies, and illuminates opportunities. Our process was no different.

Among prospective undergraduate adults learners, we uncovered characteristics and qualities they deem important when selecting a college:

- ALL Prospective Students
 - Tuition assistance
 - Faculty with practical experience
 - Value Equation - quality vs. cost
 - Practical, hands-on learning
 - Job outcomes
 - Inclusivity
 - Internships
- Undergraduates
 - Quality of academic and non-academic facilities
 - Strong professor relationships
 - Multitude of on campus activities
- Adults
 - Flexible schedules
 - Quality online instruction
 - Strong professor relationships
 - Networking opportunities/employer connections
 - Career Counseling
 - Student body diversity
 - Aiding underserved students
 - Social justice curriculum

6. What about our Lasallian Catholic identity?

We believe, as supported by current student and alumni testimonials, that many prospective students have little to no idea what “Lasallian Catholic” means, so they lack an affinity, which is why prospective students we surveyed did not rate our Lasallian Catholic affiliation as an important factor in their decision-making process. **However**, when you look at the factors that do drive decision making for prospective students, you see direct alignment with many Lasallian Catholic values (e.g. practical, value, inclusivity, outcomes).

We know that our Lasallian Catholic heritage and related educational approach makes a tremendous difference in the student experience on our campuses. So, while it may not factor heavily into the decision-making process for most students,* the transformative experience on campus is a major benefit and differentiator as an educational outcome. It remains core to our essence.

Through this branding process, we had an opportunity to rethink our messaging to prospective students. Rather than “tell” them what Lasallian Catholic means, we will “show” them in the way we express our brand. This led to one of the key pillars in our rebrand: Lasallian Catholic values create real value:

When you are greeted with respect, taught with humanity, and supported, you will find your people. People who value critical thinking, problem-solving, and character-building as much as you do. You may not know these values by name, but you carry them with you all the same.

7. What are the brand pillars and why are they important?

- Lasallian Catholic values create real value.
- Faculty and staff are all in for every student.
- A community that cares.
- Education that’s within reach of many.
- Practical, hands-on education for the real world.

These pillars form the foundation of the Saint Mary’s experience. They come from the brand research - those qualities and characteristics most important to students.

8. How expensive was this and why when we have budget concerns?

This rebrand **and the website redesign** are critical parts of the strategic plan, and the most visible and meaningful way our efforts can impact enrollments in a positive way.

While it is true that branding can and usually is quite expensive, the brand project was done through reallocations of the marketing budget so additional budget was not requested for the visual identity and brand positioning work.

9. Why are you rolling out the brand slowly?

We are not doing a traditional brand launch - big advertising splash, PR push, updating all materials, signage, etc. - right now because we are mindful of budget constraints. That said, we are focusing our efforts on those areas that will have the greatest impact on external audiences:

- Recruitment
- Advancement
- President's office
- Websites
- Banners on Winona Campus

We will begin to build on the new branding over the summer in new advertising focused on brand messaging for our target audiences.

Staff and faculty can look forward to a more formal introduction and education session in later summer. While we had originally planned a spring introduction for faculty and staff prior to the rollout, the important news about changes in the academic offerings in Winona deserved the attention and energies of faculty and staff.

We continue to build out brand resources on the [Marketing and Communication site](#) (login required) to provide the tools and information we all need to support the brand. Your feedback on these tools and resources is appreciated.

10. Some decisions, like allowing personalization in our email signature, seem restrictive and unnecessary. Why?

Our hope as we launch this new brand (any new brand) is to have it easily recognized and that requires seeding it with as much consistency as possible. The goal is that any and all receivers of any communication, in this case email, see clearly that we all are consistent with how brand elements are represented.

Like a business card, the point of the signature line is information - name, contact information, organization (logo is considered an anchor or last impression in an email). Best practice, especially at launch and given we are doing a slow rollout based on budget restrictions, is to keep signature lines clean and consistent.

11. A small but vocal segment of our alumni have been sharing negative reactions about the rebrand. How do you respond?

Saint Mary's, along with all higher education, is at a crossroads and had to act to create stability. Without that, we can't execute our Lasallian Catholic educational mission. Decisions made this spring to phase out a number of majors, which resulted in layoff notices to 13 faculty (to go into effect May '23 or a year after that) are upsetting and disappointing to many. We understand, are feeling the loss and impact on our community as well, and empathize with those directly impacted and those expressing their opinions.

Our work is future-oriented, we are facing and proactively preparing for the ongoing and increasingly heightened nation-wide changes impacting higher education. Raising awareness of the extraordinary value we have to offer students and our communities is an effective and necessary strategy. Important to note that brand building is listed by various marketing and enrollment experts as critical to succeeding today in a crowded higher education landscape. According to EDgage, a resource for higher education marketers, "Colleges and Universities MUST build a strong connection between their brand and their promise." The organization discusses several points including:

"INVEST IN YOUR BRAND AND BUILDING BRAND AWARENESS WITH MESSAGING THAT IS ALIGNED WITH YOUR STATED AND DELIVERED BRAND PROMISE." Marketing and Enrollment Management Benchmarks 2022 by Education Dynamics.

For more information and templates, which will continue to be added, please visit our [website](#).