The title of Pope John Paul II’s Apostolic Constitution, *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* (ECE) (1990), translated as *From the Heart of the Church*, aptly describes the history of Catholic higher education in the United States. Catholic colleges and universities did truly grow from the heart of the Catholic Church. Its mission and the growth and development of these institutions of higher education mirrored the growth and development of Catholicism in the United States from the late 18th century through the 19th century. The history of Catholic higher education is also a study of adapting to circumstances (Dosen, 2009). Although seeking to remain true to its vision and values, the enterprise has contended with Protestantism, wrestled with anti-Catholicism, and adjusted to modernity with its innovations in curriculum, academic freedom, and governance structures (Gleason, 1995; Mahoney, 2003). Consequently, in the contemporary context, the nation’s Catholic colleges and universities have remained key constituencies in U.S. higher education. The enterprise currently has over 200 institutions and, according to the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities (ACCU), Catholic higher education serves nearly 950,000 students (Data taken from Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities website, www.accunet.org. See “Catholic Higher Education – FAQs”).

Adapting to circumstances remains an important principle in Catholic higher education today. The 2014 Religious Landscape Study conducted by Pew Research Center indicates that 22.8% of the respondents identify themselves spiritually as “unaffiliated” (the religious “nones”). Among Americans aged 18–29, 36% say they are not currently affiliated with any particular religion. In this rapidly growing secular society, Catholic universities and colleges continually grapple with issues of identity, purpose, and connectedness with the institutional Church. Specifically, these institutions of higher education continue to adjust to three major ecclesial and secular trends that first appeared over 40 years ago: fewer Catholic students among the growing numbers of students on campus because Catholics have become mainstream; fewer priests, nuns, and brothers on campus; and with unrelenting competition in the higher education market, there are higher student expectations with respect to academic, athletic, and residential facilities and programs (Morey & Piderit, 2006).

Morey and Holtschneider (2001) examine the changing Catholic college culture regarding the decline in the number of members of founding religious orders on campus. Considering this decline, the authors note three possible trajectories for Catholic institutions. First, is the path of becoming private and secular, and therefore, relinquishing their Catholic identity. Many Protestant institutions have chosen this option to remain competitive in academics and enrollment. Second, is the route to adopt a more broadly based Catholic character and shed the founding religious order’s charism. The third course leads to a slow but continuous movement away from the founding religious order and Church teaching, resulting in loose institutional ties to the religious order and the Catholic Church that are merely historic and nostalgic. So as to avoid these three paths, the notion of adaptability, while necessary and appropriate, should be approached
with caution and be monitored to ensure it does not result in model that compromises the mission and identity of Catholic education to the point of total secularization.

With these trends and projections, a question that has plagued U.S. Catholic colleges and universities for the past 40 years is: How are these over 200 institutions of higher education distinctively Catholic? This perennial question is the subject of many Church documents, papal teachings, and scholarly inquiries that set the stage for the ECE (1990), which emphasizes the need for Catholic identity in its institutions of higher education for a relevant and vibrant future. Niagara University takes this question or challenge to heart in her commitment to its mission as a distinctively Catholic and Vincentian institution of higher education since 1856. Accordingly, this report highlights the comprehensive and ubiquitous manner in which the mission is vital to Niagara. Specifically, the Vincentian tradition is a mission-based spirituality, rooted in action, which discovers God in a special way through service of the poor. Given this mission, Niagara’s 26th president the Rev. James J. Maher, C.M. reminds the university community that a Vincentian education consist of three essential elements: 1) access to high need/Pell eligible students (20-35% of the total student population); 2) commitment to solutions of poverty through teaching, research, and service; and 3) creating a community of the workplace that is rooted in the dignity of the person (Inaugural Address). This means that the mission of the university participates in the gospel call to care for the poor through the vision of our patron Vincent De Paul and through the Catholic intellectual tradition of reflection and integration of faith and reason for the common good.

In order to maintain our Catholic and Vincentian identity, Niagara has continuously adapted to the changing times in (Catholic) higher education. As in the past, the university is not immune to the challenging trends facing institutions of higher education nationally and regionally. As a tuition-dependent institution that works hard to sustain fiscal and organizational effectiveness, there are six areas of change that must guide our planning and resource allocation: 1) rate of growth in enrollment; 2) demographics; 3) economic model; 4) retention and completion pressures; 5) varying learning models; and 6) use of technology for effective communication (Noel-Levitz, 2013-14??). Based on our vibrant mission and excellent learning environment, as well as these megatrends and other challenges facing Niagara, the president proposed an Operational Plan for 2015-2018 that was approved by the Board of Trustees in March of 2015. As a mission-centered and market-smart institution, the Operational Plan defines our Core values, quantifies issues and challenges of strategic magnitude, and lays out strategies for addressing them (See Standard # ???).

Niagara has also adapted to the trends facing Catholic higher education in the United States. As with most Catholic institutions, the number of members of the founding congregations is decreasing. Yet, these living symbols of mission are sharing their charisma with lay leaders who will carry on the tradition. The president has emphasized the importance of mission by establishing the position of Vice President of Mission and Ministry as president’s cabinet position. This position is complemented by a faculty member as director of mission and an administrator as director of ministry. This leadership team is mindful of trends outlined above regarding the decrease in religious
affiliation and/or practice of faith among younger people in contemporary America. The rise of “nones” (those claiming no religion affiliation) and secularism in society certainly brings challenges regarding the building blocks of our Catholic and Vincentian culture in terms of shared beliefs, values, and norms. Niagara is committed to an education of each student within a Catholic context. Accordingly, the mission offers a framework to make sense of out “why” we are here and motivates employees to fulfill the institutional goals by providing meaning to their work. This leadership team has built on the vigorous mission efforts of preceding mission officers to address our challenges and take advantage of opportunities through vibrant mission integration programs in the curriculum (e.g. NUB; a Vincentian Spirituality course); a faculty advisory group for mission integration; a Vincentian Student Scholars Program; a Vincentian Inspiration Program for employees; the Vincentian Mission Institute for lay leaders; Heritage Week celebration; Muslim prayer space; ecumenical and interfaith prayer services and celebrations; and campus ministry programs such as retreats, liturgical services, Bible study, and Vincentian service experiences. The academic sector has participated in campus wide lectures and panel discussions on current religious and ethical and moral topics such as immigration, racism and diversity, environmental sustainability, and geopolitical causes of injustices and poverty.

Niagara University has been placed on the Presidential Honor Roll for Community Service every year since its inception in 2006. Each year, 80 percent of the students participate in service learning, contributing over 1,000 hours of service each week during the academic year. Niagara is invested in the local and regional communities its economic development (e.g. Niagara Falls Global Tourism Institute); education development (e.g. Niagara Catholic High School; The Niagara Community Center; and numerous student teacher placements); and civic engagement through the Levesque Institute for Civic Engagement.

In adhering to the principle of adaptability Niagara University remains a mission-centered university in which her Catholic identity and Vincentian vision is vibrant in all areas of campus life. The challenges are numerous and various but the university’s leadership and dedicated faculty and administrators are committed to its core values of access (economically disadvantaged, diversity, etc.), degree attainment, and affordability to a high quality academic institution that is well positioned to prepare students to be engaged citizens and “servant” leaders in rapidly changing time.

• **Relationship to Other Standards or Criteria: [500-1,000 words]**
  o Identify any connection between your charge and the charges of the other groups of which you may be aware;
  o Briefly explain any collaboration that took place between groups to organize your responses.
Analysis

1. Clearly defined Mission and Goals^[question #1] that guide and focus on student learning and related outcomes and on institutional improvement; are guided by administrative, educational, and student support programs and services; and are consistent with institutional mission^[combined with Criteria question #3]

The Niagara University mission statement and enabling goals are clearly defined and shape the development of the university’s strategic planning priorities, which include measures of effectiveness. All other institutional assessment and planning processes hark back to the mission and enabling goals. The following Table 1 details the university’s mission statement and enabling goals as well as operational plan strategic priorities.

Table 1: Niagara University Mission, Goals and Current Strategic Goals

Niagara University Mission Statement

1. Niagara University educates its students for positions of responsibility in the professions and in the broader society. Through teaching, research and service in programs of study at the baccalaureate and graduate levels, Niagara seeks to develop within its students, a passion for learning.

2. The university’s commitment to the Catholic faith provides perspective in the search for truth and meaning. Catholic doctrine and its moral code inspire respect for the God-given dignity of every person and all faith traditions. Students experience the vision and reality of a gospel-based, value-centered education.

3. As a Vincentian university, Niagara draws inspiration from St. Vincent DePaul, who organized his contemporaries to respond compassionately to people’s basic needs. Continuing this tradition, Niagara seeks to inspire its students to serve all members of society, especially the poor and oppressed, in local communities and in the larger world.

4. Overall, through its curricular and extracurricular programs, Niagara University seeks to develop the whole person, mind, body, heart and soul, for the benefit of one’s personal and professional life.

Core Values

Integral to its mission are Niagara University’s Core Values, which include:

- **Spirituality** attending to the spirit within that connects us to the world around us;
- **Knowledge** which is achieved through the lifelong pursuit of truth and excellence;
- **Creativity** evidenced through innovative and practical responsiveness to the needs of all people;
- **Integrity** through consistent, continued truthfulness to oneself and others;
- **Compassion** that allows opening oneself to relationships with others that result in serving with acceptance and respect.
Niagara University Operational Plan for 2015-18 Strategic Priorities

1. Niagara University will embed mission in all that we do so as to remain true to our Catholic and Vincentian mission.
2. Niagara University will define our educational philosophy in moving into the future.
3. Niagara University will develop a new master plan for the university campus.
4. Niagara University will achieve common goals through strategic alliances.
5. Niagara University will address issues of strategic magnitude through a multi-year operational plan.

2. The Mission and Goals are developed through appropriate collaborative participation by all who facilitate or are otherwise responsible for institutional development and improvement

The university’s mission and enabling goals and strategic priorities (2015-18) are developed, periodically reviewed (through various forms of assessment, for example: Mission Statement and Enabling Goals, mission audits, annual reports of all university departments, Ex Corde Ecclesiae, Vincentian Sponsorship Document, etc.), and formally supported and approved by the university’s governing body. The current mission and enabling goals were developed through a process that included all elements of the university in discussions and focus group before being submitted to the president and discussed and approved by the board of trustees. The mission statement is evaluated at least every five years, and revisions are made accordingly. Although the mission statement was last evaluated in 2015, the last revision of the mission statement was in 1999. The strategic priorities are the result of a collaborative process that included the University’s Planning Council comprised of faculty, administration, and students as well other members of the university community (board members, staff, etc.). The goals are set on a three-year cycle.

There has been agreement that, while the current mission statement requires work and more succinct expression, a revision will take form in the near future. Specifically, in reviewing the mission statement, the University Planning Council has identified a particular need to understand and be able to express the distinctive elements of a Vincentian institution vs. other charisms that inform competitor institutions. Even though there is room for more ongoing education in mission, the process of intensive introspection during this Middle States process has supported a deepened understanding of our mission from all sectors of the institution.

3. Mission and Goals that address external and internal contexts and constituencies

Niagara University prepares its students to serve in the local and global community. Our mission states: “Niagara seeks to inspire its students to serve all members of society, especially the poor and oppressed, in local communities and in the larger world.” The first strategic priority of Niagara’s Operational Plan for 2015-18 states that the university will “embed mission in all that we do so as to remain true to our Catholic and Vincentian
mission.” A significant objective of this strategy priority addresses the internal context and constituency through “sustaining our enrollment of Pell-eligible students at 20-35% of the total student population, and increasing their persistence and success.” And another objective of this strategic priority powerfully addresses the external context and constituency through a “focusing our teaching, service, and research on poverty causation and solutions, particularly as the affect residents of Western NY, and ensure that all students apply these fundamental elements if mission through service-learning opportunities.” Furthermore, the fourth strategic priority of the Operational Plan is demonstrates Niagara’s commitment to strategic and productive alliances and partnerships regionally, nationally, and internationally that will be essential in the changing landscape of higher education. Emphasis within these alliances and partnerships is always placed on addressing issues of poverty and carrying the Catholic/Vincentian message forward.

Some evidence to support Niagara’s success in achieving these goals that are both internal and external comes from the results of the 2013 National Survey of Student Engagement which include additional questions as part of the Consortium of Catholic Colleges and Universities. The questions specifically asked how students perceive and understand the missions of their institutions. One of the special questions asked about the extent to which their institution offers opportunities for volunteering and community service, both of which are integral to the external focus of Niagara’s mission. Results detailed in Table 2 show that Niagara University students perceive significantly greater opportunities for “volunteering and community service” and greater numbers believe “the heritage of the founding religious community is evident her” compared to students at other participating Catholic colleges. In addition Niagara students’ responses were higher than the Catholic counterparts’ on the “understanding of the mission” and for seniors on the “reflection of the mission in the course offerings.” Table 3 shows that that the impact of mission on students at NU is translated into mission-driven alumni who are still aiding the university in achieving its goals and mission.

Table 2: Benchmarking NU Students’ Perceptions about Service and Mission [to be updated]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NSSE 20__ part II Items for Catholic Colleges and Universities Consortium</th>
<th>Niagara University</th>
<th>Catholic C&amp;U</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2c. The institution offers opportunities for volunteering and community service.</td>
<td>First Year 4.41</td>
<td>4.26*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Senior Year 4.66</td>
<td>4.21*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2a. The mission of this institution is widely understood by students.</td>
<td>First Year 3.96</td>
<td>3.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Benchmarking NU Students’ Perceptions about Service and Mission NSSE 2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>NU Senior</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The mission of this institution is widely understood by students.</td>
<td>3.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethical and spiritual development of students is an important part of the mission at this institution.</td>
<td>4.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This institution offers opportunities for volunteering and community service.</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social and personal development of students is an important part of the mission at this institution.</td>
<td>4.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparation for a career is an important part of the mission of this institution.</td>
<td>4.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The heritage of the founders/founding religious community of this institution is evident here.</td>
<td>4.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The faculty and staff here are respectful of people of different religions.</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The students here are respectful of people of different religions.</td>
<td>4.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students at this institution feel free to express their individual spirituality.</td>
<td>4.07</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2f. The heritage of the founding religious community of this institution is evident here.</th>
<th>Senior Year</th>
<th>First Year</th>
<th>Senior Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>4.37</td>
<td>4.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.37</td>
<td>4.13*</td>
<td>4.13*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2m. The mission of this institution is reflected in its course offerings.</th>
<th>Senior Year</th>
<th>First Year</th>
<th>Senior Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>3.84</td>
<td>3.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.81</td>
<td>3.89</td>
<td>3.81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The faculty and staff here are respectful of people of different races and cultures | 4.36  
The students here are respectful of people of different races and cultures | 4.18  
People of different sexual orientations are accepted socially here | 4.01  
The environment here encourages students to develop an appreciation of diversity | 4.06  
At this institution, there are opportunities for students to strengthen their religious commitment | 4.27  
The mission of this institution is reflected in its course offerings | 4.17  
As a result of my experience here, I am more aware of social justice (fairness and equality) issues in the world | 3.97  
The faculty at this institution discusses the ethical implications of what is being studied | 3.99  
As a result of my experience here, I am more aware of my own personal values | 4.2  

Current religious preference: | 46.34% identified as Roman Catholic

Table 3: Alumni Impact with regard to mission: Post graduation alums are still aiding the university in achieving its goals and mission.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2015 Alumni Stats per month Office of Alumni and Volunteer Engagement contacts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niagra Notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Events</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. The Mission and Goals guide faculty, administration, staff, and governing structures in making decisions related to planning, resource allocation, program and curricular development, and the definition of institutional and educational outcomes. The impact of this includes support of scholarly inquiry and creative activity, at levels and of the type appropriate to the institution =*{Criteria question E}*

Niagara’s mission is clear in its support for scholarly and creative activity. The mission implicitly requires faculty to be engaged in research in their fields in order to prepare students for careers and provide programs in the liberal arts. The first enabling goal explicitly states “through teaching, research and service in programs of study at the baccalaureate and graduate levels, Niagara seeks to develop within its students a passion for learning.” The Middle States standards also call for demonstrated support of scholarly and creative activity at all levels of the type appropriate to the institution’s purposes and character. Niagara University has a clear program of support for faculty research and scholarly and creative activity (see Standard _ for more detailed information). The university research council also holds annual conferences showcasing faculty research.

Some of the university’s support is directed specifically to mission-oriented activities, such as special Vincentian research grants that are provided for research in areas related to poverty and social justice, and stipends that have been given for developments of service learning courses. Another impactful scholarly endeavor is found in Vincentian Scholars Program that consists of 16 scholarship students in all fours years for the purpose of addressing issues poverty through service and research. Our annual Vincentian Heritage Week is yet another way in which the Vincentian charism is highlighted in the academy. During this special week a Vincentian convocation is convened by the president and selected members of the university and community are awarded for the service to the poor. One awardee is awarded an honorary doctoral degree and offers an academic address on Vincentian values.
The university also supports scholarly and creative activity that is linked to mission in less formal ways. For example, the theatre program invites faculty and community to participate in productions that are often on mission-related themes such as bullying, sexual assault, discrimination and harassment; the Castellani Art Museum collaborates with faculty to develop joint programs; and student research funds are made available to allow for research supplies and presentations at conferences, and encourage collaboration with faculty. Information about other creative endeavors that support the mission at the university can be found using this link: http://www.niagara.edu/serving-the-community

Planning

Niagara University’s mission and goals affect planning at all levels and in all sectors of the university. The University Planning and Assessment Department (UPA) oversee our commitment to using the mission and goals as a benchmark in all university planning, and in evaluation of student learning and institutional effectiveness. The University Planning Committee (UPC) working with the administration and faculty, follow the same commitment in their effort to ensure a holistic education at Niagara, as well as their commitment to implementing programs that reflect our commitment to service and care: e.g., the planning involved in the reestablishment of the NU School of Nursing.

Resource Allocation

Niagara University’s mission and goals guide the resource allocation process (led by the university budget board (UBB) since 2015). For example, the university has significantly increased the budget for the freshman seminar (NUB) in 2015, which communicates and explains the mission of the university to incoming students. In addition, various research grants have been set aside, as outlined below, for mission-related topics. And finally, the campus ministry department utilizes its budget to organize numerous mission-related events as can be seen on their website (link).

Curricular Development

All new courses and proposals are required to explain how their objectives align with the goals of the university and college, as evidenced here (link to Senate Curriculum Committee -SCC guidelines). Indeed, mission and goals of each department must be linked to the mission and goals of their respective college which are then explicitly linked to the mission of the university. Mission and goals are also reinforced through the accreditation processes.

Niagara develops its curriculum through a collaborative process involving both faculty and administrators. All new courses and programs (and course and program modifications) are approved by the Senate Curriculum Committee, which is composed of faculty, students, and administrators. These proposals are also evaluated by curriculum committees at the departmental and college level. The way in which the course fits in with the mission and goals of the university affects the assessment of such proposals at each of these levels of evaluation.
Teaching

Niagara University’s mission and goals guide teaching most fundamentally through the general education program. The courses in this program are required of all NU students, and are explicitly tied to the mission and goals of the university (http://www.niagara.edu/general-education). The mission and goals indicate how NU’s commitment to the Catholic faith will inspire a search for truth, and will instill an understanding and respect for all persons as well as all faith traditions. The goals also include the inspiration of students, through the example of Saint Vincent de Paul, to serve all members of society—especially the oppressed—in local communities and in the global world. Furthermore, the mission statement indicates that students will be educated through programs in the liberal arts.

The general education courses and its program goals reflect these mission goals as follows. The course requirements reflect the breadth and content of a traditional liberal arts education. Students take courses in religious studies, philosophy, writing, English, natural and social sciences, humanities, math, analytical skills, and cultural diversity. Developing students’ ability to think critically is a central part of a liberal arts education. The general education goals emphasize various types of critical thinking skills, as well as skills in information literacy and in communication with diverse groups.

The general education goals that guide the curriculum correspond to the above mentioned mission goals; they include strengthening students’ abilities to understand religions including Catholicism, the philosophical foundations of ethics, St. Vincent de Paul and the Vincentian tradition, and the responsibilities of social justice. Students are also required to take a course with a service-learning component (link to Gen Ed again).

The general education curriculum is assessed by the general education committee, which monitors the participating departments by requiring annual reports assessing the achievement of the general education goals.

All university teaching, not just courses in the Gen Ed program, is guided by the mission goals. In addition to programs in the liberal arts, the mission statement emphasizes programs in career preparation. As noted above, every course and program must demonstrate how their goals are linked to those of the university. In the time since our most recent Middle States accreditation, we have developed a new freshman seminar (Niagara University Beginnings, or NUB) that is heavily focused on communicating and explicating the mission of the university. This interactive seminar, led (almost exclusively) by full-time faculty members in the students’ major, with the assistance of a student “peer mentor”, includes units explaining the value of the liberal arts and the meaning of a Catholic and Vincentian education. More information about NUB can be found here: http://sites.niagara.edu/other/nub/

Scholarship
Research and scholarship aligned with the university’s mission and goals is encouraged in numerous ways. Most fundamentally, when making hiring decisions we evaluate the extent to which candidates’ research programs align with the university mission. There are also several programs that provide incentives to study mission-related topics for faculty once they are here. For example:

- The fund for the improvement of teaching (link) subsidizes research and development of new and effective teaching methods.
- Special summer research grants are set aside for research of teaching and the study of poverty.
- The Niagara Reaches out to the World Program
- Faculty members regularly publish work related to mission in numerous departments, including: philosophy, religious studies, communication, English, etc.

**Service Programs**

Niagara University’s mission and goals are exemplified by numerous service programs offered at the university. Every Niagara University student must complete 3 hours of service in order to graduate, regardless of major, and the Niagara University Student Government Association requires that all clubs complete significant amounts of service to receive funding (3 hours per member, see: [http://nusga.niagara.edu/assets/ResourcePage/NUSGA-Funding-2.pdf](http://nusga.niagara.edu/assets/ResourcePage/NUSGA-Funding-2.pdf)), and other programs and efforts include, but are not limited to:

- Niagara University Day of Service
- B.A.S.I.C. experiences
- The Levesque Institute
- Other Campus Ministry programs ([https://www.niagara.edu/campus-ministry-events/](https://www.niagara.edu/campus-ministry-events/))
- St. George’s Soup Kitchen (student run, with the assistance of faculty and staff).

5. **The Mission and Goals are publicized and widely known by the institution’s internal stakeholders**

Niagara University’s Mission and Goals are effectively communicated to our campus community in a number of ways. Students, faculty, and staff alike are immersed in a mission of education and career preparation rooted in the Catholic and Vincentian traditions. At any point, one can easily access the written statement of mission and goals on our university website. Perhaps more effective, however, is the transference of the mission and goals through action and story-telling.
From the moment a new student steps foot onto campus until graduation, she comes to know the university mission not as a set of written guidelines or standards, but as an experience to be lived. Summer Orientation welcomes new students and their families on day one with an explanation of the goals the institution has for all students and the opportunities students will encounter through their time at Niagara. A brief introduction to the history of the university and its Vincentian heritage presents the foundation from which the institution serves. Building upon the summer overview of what a student can expect from a liberal arts education, Fall Orientation engages students further in the Vincentian tradition of the university through works of service in the community. Every first year student is required to take a university orientation course called “Niagara University Beginnings.” Through this course, students delve even deeper into what it means to be a student at a Catholic and Vincentian institution through a section devoted entirely to University Mission. The liberal arts curriculum requires core selection of classes from all disciplines to ensure a diverse and all-encompassing academic resumé. As a student progresses through his course of study, the opportunity for an internship may arise. During the 2014-2015 academic year, 230 students completed professional internships. Career Services made 85 class visits and presentations and met individually with 1,196 students. Additionally, 2,297 students participated in classroom presentations and workshops, 333 had on-campus job interview, and 1,321 attended Career Service events to assist students in job placement and the transition from Niagara University to the workforce, expressing a key component of our university mission.

Even prior to their first day on campus, prospective students and their families encounter the university mission through admissions initiatives. One new recruitment tool designed and implemented in the fall semester 2015 is the “listening tour.” This tour brings our university president in contact with students, faculty, and administrators of Catholic high school to present the mission, goals, and qualities of the Niagara experience which distinguish it from competitors. The primary aim of this unique listening tour with the president is to foster new relationships with potential feeder schools and strengthen existing bonds.

Similar to the students’ orientation program, Niagara University welcomes all new employees to campus with a new hire orientation. During this program, the university mission is presented in a practical way that helps new hires begin to see the many ways the mission guides our university planning and decision-making. The program serves as a general introduction to the expectations placed on employees in supporting and furthering the university’s mission of education and career preparation in the Catholic and Vincentian service.

The university offers a wide variety of opportunities for the campus community to live out its Vincentian tradition of charity and service. For the past nine years, Niagara University has been named to the President’s Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll. Students participate in more than 1,000 hours of service work each week during the academic year. Through annual programs such as the Office of Campus Ministry’s Brothers And Sisters In Christ (BASIC) service immersion experience and weekly soup kitchen, students join with faculty, administrators, and alumni to assist those
most in need in our local community, nationally, and around the world. Each year, during Vincentian Heritage Week, we celebrate Niagara Reaches Out to the World, a day dedicated to highlighting the vast good works that our students, faculty, administration, and alumni are involved with around the world. These experiences and projects, and the many ways the mission is lived out among our community members, are further relayed to the campus community through our Daily Post, an electronic newsletter distributed to the entire university community. Additionally, during the fall semester 2015, a new website was created that will serve as a repository for all things mission-related. Through this website, people will be able to further explore the mission of the university and the many works and opportunities that are available to the community.

Student responses to the National Survey of Student Engagement additional “mission-related” questions provided on page 7 demonstrate effective communication and transmittance of the university mission and goals to our student population (see page __ for discussion of survey results).

NB: Members of Standard 1 believe that we have answered Criteria “C” and “G” and Criteria questions #2 and #4 throughout the document and have also chosen to collapse some of the questions since there was some redundancy in them.