

**Wisconsin Educational Approval Program  
Application for Renewal 2024-25  
Institutional Planning**

**Saint Mary's University of Minnesota**

Update 2024-25

Saint Mary's University is transitioning to a new academic structure as of May 2024 that includes a move away from a Provost as the chief academic officer, to two new Vice Presidents for Academic Affairs, one for the traditional undergraduate College and one for the Schools of Graduate and Professional Programs (SGPP), including online programming. Historically, the SGPP has been the most active academic unit in terms of offering programs in Wisconsin. However, as noted below, the SGPP has largely gone online and is not offering any courses through our SGPP on ground in Wisconsin. At this time, the new academic administration is reconsidering opportunities for Wisconsin, and hopes to have more clarity on this early in 2025, at which time it will approach WEAP with questions about how best to move forward.

What is included below was the existing planning document prior to the changes noted above.

Update for 2023-24

A SWOT analysis and goals included below for the Education programs was completed in March 2020 as part of Saint Mary's annual planning process. The analysis includes data collection and analysis by the program directors, the Dean of the School of Education, and the Provost and Dean of Faculties. Since 2020, the School of Education has undergone significant change in leadership and programming and has shifted to primarily online or hybrid program offerings. The university recently named a new dean of the School of Education, replacing the previous dean who left the university after just two years. Many of our existing programs in the School of Business and Technology and the School of Health and Human Services have also shifted to online and hybrid delivery. The university recently paused admission for the Master of Education in Teaching and Learning, which had operated in Wisconsin. The MA in Education which offers courses in partnership with EduCate is now offering most courses online. Currently, the university has no plans to expand programming on-site in Wisconsin; however, the arrival of a new Provost in February 2023 has spurred new discussions about growth that may include the state of Wisconsin. With the changes in academic leadership mentioned above, discussions regarding operations in Wisconsin have not yet been solidified or operationalized, which will occur over the next academic year.

Strengths:

- Experienced and expanding faculty
- Faculty located throughout the state of Wisconsin
- Relevant and effective curriculum
- Effective program development/program review process
- Cohort-based delivery model
- Direction from the University Strategic Plan: 2019-2023

- Direction from the University's Strategic Priorities (Priority 4: Innovation and Disruption of the Model)
- Strong strategic partnerships with WI public and private schools
- Ongoing maintenance of high quality academic experience in a distinctive blended format that meets the needs of adult learners across the state with opportunities for online instruction for informational content and face-to-face instruction for discussion and "hands-on" activities..
- Efficient and cost-effective program delivery
- High completion rates
- Positive reviews from students and other stakeholders

#### Weaknesses:

- Geographic distance of faculty, staff, and students from each other
- University financial constraints for promoting growth
- Program leadership and staff turnover

#### Opportunities:

- Improve outreach efforts across Minnesota and Wisconsin.
- Leverage new personnel with greater energy and technological expertise
- US DOE and SARA regulations provide opportunities to increase/improve understanding and communication of state licensure requirements for licensed professions in MN, WI, and other states.
- Strengthened partnership with Educate-WI to improve opportunities for licensure-track students.
- State and regional accreditation reviews provide ongoing impetus for improving assessment tools and strategies across programs.
- Faculty interest in increased collaboration and vertical alignment within programs.
- Faculty interest in professional development opportunities and instructor observation.
- Role clarification efforts highlight areas of opportunity to centralize key student support functions.

#### Threats:

- Dependence on K-12 system for students
- Competitors offering fully online programs
- New regulations and processes from regional accreditors and federal government related to faculty qualifications and state licensure disclosures.
- K-12 education programs require individual state licensing without reciprocity with Minnesota
- Cuts in state K-12 spending and weakening of teachers' collective bargaining; earning a Master Degree has been removed from many districts' salary schedule, thereby providing disincentive to pursuing master's degree.
- COVID-19 — necessity of shifting on-ground courses to online, fall planning uncertainties, drops in enrollment, etc.