

**From:** Provost Laura Hartley, EIC  
**Sent:** Friday, May 14, 2021 5:00 PM  
**To:**  
**Subject:** Passing of Gary Ames



**Office of the Provost**

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It is with deep sadness that I share the news that Gary Ames, current Board of Trustees member and one of Seattle Pacific University's biggest supporters and most generous donors, passed away very suddenly on Thursday night. This is a shock and profound loss not only for his wife, Barbara, and their family, but for the entire SPU community.

It's hard to describe the enormous impact Gary and Barbara have made at Seattle Pacific. It started in 2001 with an initial \$1 million commitment to fund a [University-wide initiative](#) to support students coming from the most underrepresented cultural and ethnic communities. At that time, less than 10% of SPU's student population came from traditionally underrepresented backgrounds. The impact of that initial gift and additional support from the Ames paved the way for a current undergraduate population with 50% of students from traditionally underrepresented backgrounds. The [Ames Scholarship and now the Ames Leadership Program](#) have supported more than

130 students through the years, and [alumni have gone on to complete medical school, law school, or graduate school](#). At annual gatherings, Gary would say that one day an Ames Scholar should become an SPU Board of Trustees member, and he was able to see that realized when Dr. Denise Martinez and Kevin Johnson joined the board.

In 2015, the library building was rededicated as the Ames Library “in honor of Gary and Barbara Ames for their significant contributions to Seattle Pacific University — for their generosity, leadership, commitment to excellence and opportunity for all, and, most importantly, for their dedication to advancing the gospel of Jesus Christ.” A few years later, Gary and Barbara donated a collection of maps of Mexico and early North America which now make up the [Ames Map Collection](#) in the library that bears their names.

Gary and Barbara were honored with the [2019 President’s Award for Philanthropy](#) for their generous service and contributions to the University. It was a special time to honor this amazing couple who have donated nearly \$8 million out of their conviction that Seattle Pacific is a vital Christian presence in the city and to the world.

Gary was the former president and CEO of USWest Communications and MediaOne International. He was on the SPU Board of Trustees for a combined total of 16 years, serving twice as chair and named emeritus trustee in 2015. He started a second board term in 2018, and also served on the SPU Foundation Board.

In an [article for Response magazine](#) in 2002, he wrote about his philosophy on retirement and vision to bring students from historically underrepresented backgrounds to SPU. “I don’t think God put me on earth just to be CEO of a telecommunications company; I think he wants me to put my gifts to work for the benefit of people.” All of us at SPU have been the very fortunate beneficiaries of his many gifts.

Barbara and the family have requested privacy as they cope with this unexpected loss. Please keep them in your prayers, and we will let you know about any future plans for a memorial service. In the meantime, you can send notes and cards to the family at:

Barbara Ames, c/o University Advancement  
Seattle Pacific University  
3307 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue West, Suite 304  
Seattle, WA 98119

Laura Hartley

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