

From: Interim President Menjares <president@spu.edu>
Sent: Tuesday, September 7, 2021 4:21 PM
To:
Subject: Board Consultant Update



Dear member of the Seattle Pacific University community,

Like institutions around the country, the Seattle Pacific University Board of Trustees and campus community have dealt with many complex challenges. From a global pandemic, to a presidential transition, to discussions around culture and policy, we have engaged significant issues. As isolated events, it would be difficult; taken collectively, the challenges create undeniable institutional stress.

At the same time, this is a committed board and campus community. I know from multiple discussions across our community and within the trustees, there is a desire to listen and understand the critical issues before reaching conclusions. This is my hope as we begin the process.

With this in mind, the board has sought external assistance. A team from Venture International LLC (VI) (www.vianswers.com) has been invited to help us work toward a shared direction. While the complete team continues to be finalized, Dr. Andrew Westmoreland, Adrea Hill, and Dr. Curt Bechler will be actively working with us the next several months.

Dr. Andrew (Andy) Westmoreland is a seasoned and successful past president of two private denominationally affiliated Christian universities. He is very attuned to the problems confronting Christian higher education in today's world. He also brings experience navigating and retaining strong relationships with sponsoring denominations during difficult times. As the past chair of the board for SACSCOC, the regional accreditor for 800 colleges and universities in the Southeast, he brings deep knowledge and experience in the areas of good governance practices, trustee relationships, and accreditation requirements. While Dr. Westmoreland recently retired as president of Samford University in Alabama, he has graciously agreed to work with VI and SPU in the ongoing process of discernment.

Adrea Hill is a partner at Venture International LLC. For over a decade, Hill has worked within the manufacturing industry in the areas of training and technology. During that time, she led and

directed multiple teams that focused on how to help individuals and groups learn and engage collectively and virtually. At VI, she works with institutional and community assessments, organizational crisis situations, research white papers, and she is currently leading a team to write and produce a virtual board governance training series.

For over 25 years, Dr. Curt Bechler has worked with organizations and industries in crisis and conflict situations. At Venture International LLC, he helped clients that have had large-scale internal employee conflicts, criminal activities (such as murder, abuse, and embezzlement), mergers and acquisitions, culture change, etc. He has been a faculty member at Denison University in Granville, Ohio, and more recently at Aquinas College in Grand Rapids, Michigan. As a tenured faculty member, he chaired a range of committees, including rank and tenure, and was twice voted Outstanding Faculty Member of the Year by the Aquinas College community senate. His research and writing are in the areas of leadership and listening, and crisis communication.

The Venture team will work with the Board of Trustees of Seattle Pacific, our campus community, and the leadership team to achieve the following outcomes:

1. Assist the Board of Trustees, the senior leadership, and the campus community in identifying and understanding points of conflict, building trust between each other individually, and in fostering trust among SPU stakeholders.
2. Assist the Board of Trustees toward a renewed understanding of healthy board governance practices and fiduciary responsibilities.
3. Provide additional context and data for the Board of Trustees and senior leadership for decision making as the institution confronts significant external variables, including local, state, and national governments, accrediting agencies, and the shifting demands of the higher education market.
4. Assist the Board of Trustees and senior leadership as they address current policies, practices, and challenges, not to provide answers but to reliably and faithfully support a framework for discernment-based decisions.
5. Assist the Board of Trustees and senior administration in the development and implementation of a communication plan for decisions emerging from the process outlined above.

My hope is that the Venture team can help us grow and learn together as we seek to live out our faith and values. They have noted that complex problems are rarely solved through singular events or leadership transitions. They recommend that we think about this as a four-phase process.

- Phase 1: Listening and Issue Assessment
- Phase 2: Education and Development
- Phase 3: Creation of a Shared Direction
- Phase 4: Monitoring and Feedback

The first phase, "Listening and Issue Assessment," will begin immediately. The Venture team will be on campus this week and will begin to talk with a range of board members, faculty members, and

staff members. They will have multiple visits and Zoom calls over the coming two months. Near the conclusion of this phase, VI will report to the SPU leadership and the board about their initial findings and preliminary recommendations. Phase two will be built on the data from those discussions.

In talking with the Venture team, they noted the saying, “If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.” Our commitment as a leadership team and board is to take this journey together as a campus community so that we can continue our mission of graduating people of competence and character, becoming people of wisdom, and modeling a grace-filled community. We must engage our own culture so that we can continue to change the world!

Finally, let me again express my appreciation for each of you and your commitment and unique contributions to the SPU community. I, and the leadership team and board, value your feedback and support as we move forward with this process. Please join me in seeking God’s wisdom and grace and as we work to find a shared path for the future.

Thank you for your support and prayers,

Dr. Pete C. Menjares
Interim President



3307 3rd Ave West, Seattle WA 98119-1997