

**From:** SPU Board of Trustees <SPU-Board@spu.edu>  
**Sent:** Thursday, September 23, 2021 1:19 PM  
**To:**  
**Subject:** Update from Cedric Davis, Board chair



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Dear Seattle Pacific University faculty and staff,

On behalf of the Board of Trustees, welcome back to a new academic year and to the opportunities that await each of us. I hope the summer allowed time for renewal and fun with family and friends. In keeping with our desire to inform the campus community on important matters, I want to provide a brief update regarding the ongoing work of the board.

First, please join me in expressing appreciation to President Pete Menjares for providing encouragement and direction for our campus community since his [appointment](#) as interim president on July 1. President Menjares' depth of experience in university leadership, his compassionate heart, and his collaborative spirit will be important in this season for SPU. The Seattle Pacific community has already experienced President Menjares' deep, earnest, and humble leadership. We as trustees, with President Menjares' leadership, are committed to an ongoing conversation with the campus and broader SPU community and have sought the expertise of [Venture International](#) to provide consultation to us in these matters. As Venture International does outreach across campus to gather information, we look forward to a thoughtful engagement and process of discernment. Each of you embodies the mission of our institution to our students and their families and we are praying for you in your ongoing work.

Over the past six months, there have been multiple challenges for SPU and higher education in general. SPU has had extensive discussions around our policy on human sexuality, LGBTQIA+ employment, and next steps going forward. This discussion is linked to our affiliations, identity as a Christian university, and the strategic vision for SPU. Higher education is also facing great uncertainties. The demographic of traditional age students is shrinking and, with it, comes financial

challenges for many private colleges and universities. Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic continues to create ongoing health, economic, and social concerns for students and institutions. Indeed, this is a difficult time but we know that God is sovereign and has a plan for SPU.

The first two responsibilities for trustees in SPU's by-laws are to "approve the University's mission and ensure its fulfillment" and "approve and support the strategic direction and vision of the University." Following closely behind is the duty to "elect the President." We are seeking to perform each of these duties in ways that promote clarity and health for our campus community. It follows that a key task before the Board is beginning a presidential search. We recognize that a robust and effective presidential search can take a year to 18 months to complete. As is the case with so many important decisions in life, it is more significant to prioritize intentionality, thoughtfulness, and wisdom rather than be driven by haste. While a timeline for the search process has not been set, we will involve the campus community at different points of the process. In the meantime, Dr. Menjares will serve as interim president until a new president is selected and officially appointed. Functioning as the Chief Executive Officer, with all the powers and responsibilities assigned to him by the Board and the bylaws of the University, we believe that the appointment of Dr. Menjares is a reflection of God's providence and provision.

As trustees, who are also parents, alumni, and volunteers, we have observed your engagement with continuing students and the incoming class as well as how you embody the mission of Seattle Pacific University! Please know that we recognize, honor, and deeply appreciate, your commitment and hard work. We are praying for you as the academic year begins and have been encouraged to hear that faculty and staff are praying for, and walking with, us during this time of discernment. We continue to seek God's wisdom as we strengthen, and deepen, our collective commitment to engaging the culture and changing the world by graduating people of competence and character, becoming people of wisdom, and modeling grace-filled community. Yet, in the midst of these times, we will continue to deliver academic excellence, provide a transformative and holistic student experience, and nurture a vital Christian identity and purpose for all in our community.

In the months ahead, I will be writing to you to offer periodic updates. May the will of God provide clarity to each of us and may God continue to bless Seattle Pacific University in year ahead!

Cedric Davis  
Chair, Board of Trustees



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