

From: Board of Trustees <SPUBoard@spu.edu>
Sent: Tuesday, November 23, 2021 9:54 AM
To:
Subject: Trustee Update to SPU Faculty and Staff



November 23, 2021

For the first time since facing the challenges of COVID-19 in the spring of 2020, the members of our SPU Board of Trustees met face-to-face last week, first for one and one-half days of discussion and planning and then for one and one-half days of regular meetings. While in past years we may have taken for granted the advantages to in-person meetings, we will never look again at such opportunities as routine. Our conversations were spirited, meaningful, wide-ranging, and healthy.

On behalf of all trustees and our administrative leadership, I want to thank the members of the Faculty LGBTQIA+ Task Force for meeting with a working group of trustees several weeks ago. The conversation that took place on Nov. 8 was a valuable step toward rebuilding the trust essential to move SPU forward.

During our trustee conversations this week, we achieved widespread agreement that we need to build on the emerging foundation for dialogue, clarity of understanding, and a shared sense of direction and purpose. We acknowledge that, despite our best efforts and intentions, our communication with the campus community last spring was inadequate, and there is a sense among all trustees that we did not handle the process as well as the campus community expected and deserved. We have learned important lessons.

In our meetings this past week, we agreed to work on multiple items related to the health and future of SPU. The following steps have already begun, and further communication will soon follow this memo:

1. Just as they did with the Board, we have asked the Venture International consulting team to work with the president, the faculty leadership, and the staff leadership to find times when the VI findings can be presented to the faculty and staff.

2. In the coming weeks, the board working group will return to campus and meet with additional campus groups to continue the engagement process.
3. The Board shares the Faculty LGBTQIA+ Task Force's sense of urgency to engage in discussions around the LGBTQIA+ issues; in light of this, the Board has formed a work group to meet with a similarly sized faculty/staff work group as soon as is reasonably possible.
4. The Board is committed to improving shared governance. Our president and VI team will assist us as we coordinate a process for creating common understandings and a shared vocabulary so that we can engage quickly and effectively in the months ahead.

We acknowledge that SPU is a diverse academic, faith-based community. We also acknowledge that regardless of the Board's actions earlier this year, the decisions would dissatisfy part of our campus community. There will always be individuals who say that what is done is not enough. However, we have come to recognize the law of unintended consequences. Organizational actions that are taken without careful thought may be harmful to the very people that they are intended to help. We are committed to moving forward systematically, using good data, and being student-centered. In humility and grace, we invite the campus community to move forward with us.

The Board of Trustees remains committed to Seattle Pacific University as a place of academic excellence, where difficult issues can be discussed, where all people are valued, and where individuals can find hope and peace through the saving love and grace of Jesus Christ. While the tensions that come with being ecumenical, evangelical, orthodox, and Wesleyan are at times difficult to reconcile, they remain vital to what distinguishes SPU as a Christian, liberal arts community.

Finally, we want to thank the faculty and staff for continuing to live out this distinctive mission during challenging times. You continue to inspire our students and our wider SPU community. Again, thank you. As a Board, we are looking forward to creating a shared future that continues to be a beacon of light and hope for our students and our region.

On behalf of the SPU Board of Trustees,

Cedric Davis

