

From: President
Sent: Friday, April 15, 2022 11:31 AM
Subject: LGBTQIA+ Work Group Update



April 15, 2022

On January 12, President Menjares announced the formation of the LGBTQIA+ Work Group, made up of Trustees, Administrators, Faculty, and Staff. We were given the following instructions:

The Work Group should seek to fulfill the following charge: In the face of diverse perspectives, what options might create a shared direction regarding sexual conduct expectations and employment policy (specifically with respect to LGBTQIA+ individuals) within a Free Methodist Christian context, and how do these potential options align with SPU's mission and Statement of Faith? In the face of diverse perspectives, what options might be considered to strengthen community, value and respect all people and remain true to the SPU mission and faith values? In responding to this charge, the Work Group should ensure that any options suggested empower every person within SPU to feel valued and respected.

For the past three months, our Work Group has read hundreds of pages of documents (policies, statements, articles, case studies), held listening sessions with members of our community representing the entire range of positions, studied University data, and spent many, many hours discussing, debating, and analyzing all the information available to us. We have tried – to the best of our ability – to do this work prayerfully, humbly, graciously, and openly, with the single goal of trying to discern God's will for the well-being of SPU as a Christian university and the well-being of all those who make up our community.

We are now entering the final stage of that work. Our last meeting was held on April 12 to work through, one last time, all the potential options and all their implications, and to consider

if there was agreement within the group on a direction forward. We are now in the process of finalizing the written report of our work to the Board.

The Work Group was “charged” to provide by April 15 “Communication to the Board, faculty and staff that educates them on the recommendations and options discussed.” Because of the timing of Board meetings, the April 15 deadline will be slightly delayed.

On April 22, Joshua Canada (Co-Chair) and Kevin Neuhouser (Co-Chair) will attend an online meeting of the Board of Trustees. In that meeting, we will provide the Board with an oral summary of the report, as well as the written report itself. The Board, then, will have the report to study until their in-person meeting May 19-20, when the report will be discussed. It is possible that the Board will make a decision at that meeting but it is also possible that the Board decides that it requires more time to consider all the issues before reaching a decision.

The exact timing and format for communication of the report to the campus is still being worked out, but the substance of the report will be clearly communicated through both a written summary and open meetings. The goal is that this will take place in early- to mid-May – after the Board has received the report, but before they meet to discuss it.

Those of us on the Work Group are very aware of how deeply this issue affects every individual and every group in our community and we know that everyone is anxious to have as much information as soon as possible. Please know that we have worked as quickly as we could without sacrificing care and thoughtfulness. We hope that you will forgive us for this slight delay in meeting the April 15 deadline and use the time in the days ahead to be in prayer, specifically for the Trustees who bear the responsibility of making this crucial decision, and for the campus community, that through this long and difficult process we learn to care more deeply for one another and to walk more faithfully together with the God who created and loves each one of us.

Humbly,

Joshua Canada (*Co-Chair*)

Kevin Neuhouser (*Co-Chair*)

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