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Pursuing the Vision

A STRATEGIC PLAN ROOTED IN HISTORY

By Dan Martin | Photos by Luke Rutan

When Seattle Pacific University was founded in 1891, the concept of “strategic planning” as we know it today did not exist. However, that doesn’t mean our founders were not planning strategically.

Strategic planning consists of proactively framing the work and future of an organization to advance and strengthen its mission. At the core of the task is clarifying the organization’s purpose, goals, and future. SPU’s rich history shows that we have long been a place of “strategic planning” — casting a vision, defining our purpose, and establishing goals.

The very first catalog of SPU (then, Seattle Seminary), from 1893–94, says, “We believe in teaching for the future. Education for Character will be our constant motto.” Our 1904–05 catalog said it this way: “It is the aim of this institution to ... send out men and women who will grace society with their accomplishments and edify it by their virtues.”

From these overarching goals, SPU began to develop under our early presidents. Orrin Tiffany (1916–26), Seattle Pacific’s second president, focused on developing our academic programs and shaping our commitment to academic freedom. Our third president, C. Hoyt Watson (1926–59), identified two goals: first, to give students “an opportunity to gain an excellent intellectual training, and second, to make possible a high type of advanced education which will qualify for places of Christian leadership in the Church and the State.”

Through nearly 125 years of “strategic planning,” we now celebrate a full-orbed University — one that maintains its liberal arts core but surrounds that core with a seminary, a number of other highly successful professional programs, and graduate programs of national acclaim. All of these units work toward our overarching purpose of graduating students who embody the University’s vision of engaging the culture and changing the world.

Since I first came to SPU, the historic white poplar tree at the front of campus near the entrance of Tiffany Loop has embodied our enduring purpose. The tree is more than 132 years old. It was there when SPU began in 1891, and it is still there.

We propagated that tree and will plant its genetically identical progeny in a prominent campus location. My hope is that Seattle Pacific will continue to value this second-generation white poplar 132 years from now. We should see it as a living link to our founding and as a reminder of our core values, beliefs, and purpose. We build on those commitments as we look to our future.

National conversations about the future of higher education emphasize how difficult and challenging it will be to shape the field. And it will be. The pace and depth of change in the future will be different, faster, and more difficult to predict than what we have experienced before.

We will need to be nimble, proactive, prepared, and ready to adapt. We must examine meaningful trends and explore both the implications and our response.

SPU dare not rest on its laurels. We are an institution built on faith and vision and we must continue to set our sights high. We pursue a vision that will challenge us and stretch us, one that is worthy of our past and reflects our purpose.

As we look to the future of our institution and our world, we will plant a second tree alongside the second-generation white poplar: a white oak. The oak’s deep taproot will remind us that we must always remain connected to and draw

strength from our historic purpose, values, and identity. But it is not a white poplar. It is a different species, and reflects a different meaning for our community.

May the oak's majestic canopy and magnificent size remind us to always consider new thoughts, new strategies, new resources, and new economic models to not simply sustain, but to distinguish and advance the University.

Like the oak, our strategic plan extends Seattle Pacific's work in new and visionary ways. Just like those who came before us at SPU, we have goals, strategies, tactics, and action plans, many of which you will read about in the following pages.

As we pursue this vision, the University will be equipped to respond broadly and deeply to the environment around us. The strategies of our plan shape our ongoing beliefs around what the University can become.

Through our curricular and co-curricular experiences with students, we pursue our mission with the highest standard of excellence and deepest intellectual engagement, all the while nurturing and shaping our students' faith. We constantly seek to integrate and develop the whole person — intellectually, spiritually, socially, emotionally, professionally, and physically.

The strategic plan is comprehensive. It intentionally addresses every aspect of the campus and student experience here. In so doing, the plan reflects the basis of Seattle Pacific's educational philosophy: educating the whole person. In an increasingly divisive world, this philosophy unites students' scholarly pursuits with their potential for holistic growth, enabling seamless transitions from the role of university student to that of fully engaged global citizen. For examples of what this looks like, see the profiles of current student [Tatyana Lats](#), Alumnus of the Year [Tim Hanstad](#), and GOLD Alumna of the Year [Moorea Seal](#).

May God bless SPU as we move forward with resolute focus and missional alignment — driven by the pursuit of excellence, defined by an enduring purpose, and growing from a rich history toward a future of great promise and opportunity.



Daniel J. Martin is SPU's 10th president. You can follow him on Twitter [@SPUPres](#).

“It is the aim of this institution to ... send out men and women who will grace society with their accomplishments and edify it by their virtues.”



Left to right: President Dan Martin addresses incoming freshmen and their families during the 2014 New Student Convocation; students join hands in a campus worship service; students talk with each other in Tiffany Loop.

SEATTLE PACIFIC UNIVERSITY'S

Strategic Plan

"Strategic planning consists of proactively framing the work and future of an organization to advance and strengthen its mission. At the core of the task is clarifying the organization's purpose, its goals, and its future."

That's what a strategic plan should do, according to President Dan Martin. Here are the key elements of our strategic plan:

Mission Statement

Seattle Pacific University is a Christian university fully committed to engaging the culture and changing the world by graduating people of competence and character, becoming people of wisdom, and modeling grace-filled community.

Signature Commitments

Seattle Pacific University will be a place that:

Masters the tools of rigorous learning and is a vibrant intellectual community.

Embraces the Christian story, becoming biblically and theologically literate.

Understands and engages our multicultural and complex world.

Values the centrality of character formation in the life of the individual.

Strategic Vision

Seattle Pacific University will be:

Known as a premier Christian university that is orthodox, evangelical, Wesleyan, and ecumenical — selected by students able to excel at the highest academic levels, shaped by distinguished teachers and scholars, noted by a distinctive and diverse living and learning environment that reflects its Christian identity, and resourced with significant capacity to realize its mission and pursue its vision.

Known for preparing students for service and leadership by fostering holistic growth through rigorous academic study, character formation, and vocational preparation that establishes a foundation for a thriving, faithful, and meaningful life.

Known by the lives of alumni who reflect the University's value, are shaped by its mission, and embody its vision and commitment to global and cultural engagement, reconciliation, and human flourishing.

Goals

1 Academic Excellence and Relevance

Make SPU's outstanding academic programs even stronger, equipping graduates for a complex society by:

- Using innovative teaching practices and tools
- Taking advantage of our unique Seattle location
- Fostering global and intercultural competencies

2 Transformative and Holistic Student Experience

Integrate curricular and co-curricular learning opportunities into students' SPU experiences to help them think vocationally and transition well to post-college life.

3 Vital Christian Identity and Purpose

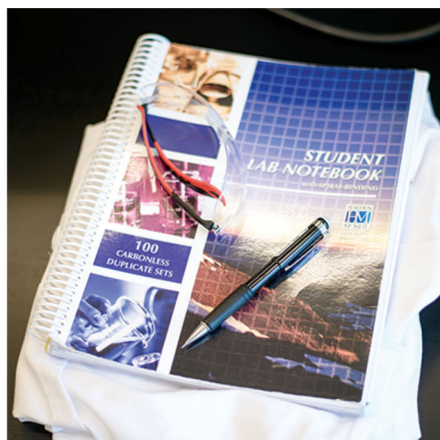
Serve as a leading theological voice in Seattle and the Pacific Northwest through thoughtful research and grace-filled discourse that embody SPU's Christian identity and commitment to human flourishing.

4 Resource Development and Attainment

Increase the number of donors and dollars invested philanthropically in SPU, and identify other sources of funding beyond tuition and fees.

5 Operational Effectiveness and Efficiency

Improve SPU continually, monitoring and assessing proven trends and using best practices to inform the University's high standards of operation.



Left to right: A 2012 SPRINT team travels to Malawi; students still use traditional tools like lab notebooks alongside classroom innovations; the Ames Library blends old and new, maintaining a digital archive collection alongside

physical texts.

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Connect with Us

Founded in 1891, Seattle Pacific University is a leading Christian university that equips people to engage the culture and change the world. Find out more about SPU's [mission](#), [core themes](#), and [vision](#).

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