

Saint Paul School of Theology Board Notes

March 2020

Tex Sample, Board Chair

Let me begin these notes by expressing—I am sure—the grief of all of us in the passing of Nancy Brown, a great woman whose list of accomplishments stagger not only the mind but the energies of us all. At Saint Paul we are especially indebted to Nancy for her industrious leadership of the Strategic Planning Committee, which formulated our strategic document of 2017 – 2025. She was also very active in the Friends of Saint Paul and in other countless ways. I am sure we now have her active support in that great crowd of witnesses in glory.

Updates on Trustee Committees

The March 27 – 28, 2020 Board Meeting will be held online via Zoom due to concerns regarding Coronavirus.

Academic Committee

The Academic Committee continues to work on developing venues for discussion between the Faculty and Trustees. A good session was held at the last Board meeting and another is planned for the Board meeting on March 27 – 28. The Faculty is engaging Quality Matters, a training program for the improvement of online teaching. Further, two initiatives, Native American and Intercultural Development Inventory, have been taken to the Strategic Planning and Evaluation Committee for their study and consideration and introduction to the work of the school. Both these initiatives address priority goals of enhancing student learning and increasing campus diversity, and to develop collaborations with other organizations and institutions. Saint Paul has also begun a two-year self-study with the Association of Theological Schools that will lead to a comprehensive evaluation in the fall of 2021. Dean Jeanne Hoeft reports that the Faculty Council is emphasizing work on recommended improvements identified in the 2018 – 2019 assessment of student learning reports. This will include building policy, classroom space, and procedures and curriculum needed for the Doctor of Ministry focus introduced this year. Further, fine tuning admissions policies and procedures and continuing data collection for the DMin Program Review are part of this work, as well as continuing to improve online teaching and use of classroom technology. In addition, discussions of faculty and adjunct faculty coverage have begun, along with attention to our current practice of offering both on-campus and hybrid paths to degree completion. Finally, we are glad to report that Professor Jim Brandt is back from his study leave and his report has been approved by the Academic Committee.

Governance Committee

The Governance Committee has been active developing nominees for Board officers for 2020 – 2021, which will be brought to the Board meeting of March 27 – 28. The Committee has also worked to clarify and make consistent some of the language in the By-laws and Policies of the school, a time-consuming work. Another issue that has been an important one for several years, is presidential succession. This in no way reflects negatively on our current president who is in the first year of a three-year contract, but rather addresses the policies, procedures, appropriate timelines, and study of succession issues so that appropriate considerations and moves are in place when they are needed. Finally, the Governance Committee is actively seeking a more racial-ethnic presence on the Board.

Resource Committee

SPST is in a strong position financially. The net income of the School has improved nearly \$300,000 in comparison with this same time last year. The net income is \$60,000 better than budgeted, and cash flow is ahead of schedule despite the capital campaign cash deficit of approximately \$200K at this point. Furthermore, the school achieved its target of 30 new student enrollments in the fall 2019, which resulted in an increase in total enrollment of 11%. In addition, the contingency budget of the school is fully funded, and we have not yet drawn endowment funds to cover scholarships, professorship chairs, or operations, because these expenses are being fully funded out of operations. Finally, the balance sheet of the school is one of its major strengths. With its current assets, Saint Paul could cover its annual expenses for ten years without generating a single dollar of income (all things else remaining equal). As Matt Mills has said "This is an amazing place for SPST to be financially."

Strategic Planning and Evaluation Committee

SPST operates on an annual planning cycle. Part of the responsibility of the Strategic Planning Committee is to monitor that cycle and to make sure the school is meeting its requirements. To be accountable to the goals of our strategic plan, the committee has established *key performance indicators* (KPIs), and each goal is evaluated in terms of how well it is being achieved. At its recent meeting the SPEC evaluated the eight goals of its strategic planning document. Two of these goals are priorities at the present time. One is a carefully recruited and diverse student body; the other is to develop partnerships with seminaries, colleges, universities, and churches. Careful attention is being given to these presently. At its recent meeting the Committee reviewed and discussed the strategic pillars, strategic goals, and strategic priorities of SPST. It will be bringing to the Board two questions: one, what does the Board want to see as evidence we are meeting our goals and priorities? And, two, how does the Board define success in ways that are observable and/or measurable? These questions will become a basic part of the Board's near future.

It is a wonderful time to serve on the Board of Saint Paul. Things look very promising for the school. To be sure, it is a challenging time for the church and for theological education, but we have great confidence that the Spirit of God will lead us in redemptive directions if we but trust an abundant grace and live into the Commonwealth we are so generously offered.

Grace and Peace,

Tex Sample
Chair, SPST Board of Trustees