

**Saint Paul School of Theology Board Notes**  
**October 2020**  
**Tex Sample, Chair**

**The Pandemic**

The 2020 – 2021 academic year is well underway at Saint Paul School of Theology. Thanks to a great deal of work by the Faculty, Staff, and Administration, the school had made preparation for various forms of learning that became even more important with the coming of the Coronavirus pandemic. Instituted last year, the Flex Initiative prepared us in unanticipated ways for COVID-19. This initiative made it possible to teach classes in person, hybrid courses (combining both in person and online instruction), and primarily online. When the pandemic hit, Saint Paul was able to go fully online and continue its educational mission and keep our, Students, Faculty, Staff, and Administration safe and out of harm's way. Our Flex Initiative not only helped us respond to the increased demand for online learning but also to provide education in far more safe ways during this epidemic. I do not mean to suggest that there was not a great deal of work carried out during the transition, but, gratefully, we had the resources to get it done. Meanwhile, the school was actively engaged in sanitizing our building, requiring face masks, and maintaining appropriate social distancing. We have avoided an outbreak of COVID on either one of Saint Paul's campuses, but many students and their loved ones have been directly affected by this pandemic. We will continue our vigilance and keep all those affected in prayer.

**The Fall Board Meeting**

On October 1–2 we had a very good fall Board meeting. I report a few of the highlights from Trustee Committees and a newly formed Trust and Collaboration Task Force.

**The Academic Committee, Lee Myane, Chair**

- Announced a new search for an assistant professor in ethics and church and society.
- The Faculty and the Administration are making use of The Intercultural Development Inventory, an assessment of intercultural competence, which develops the capability to shift cultural perspective and appropriately adapt behavior to cultural differences and commonalities.
- VPAAD Jeanne Hoelt announced that Dr. Anne Walker has been named Associate Dean of Academic Programs, as well as continuing in her role as the Executive Director of the Oklahoma Campus
- A revision of the academic Master's degree is underway.
- The self-study for the Association of Theological Education accreditation is in process with the formation of committees, gathering of data, setting timelines, and preparation of documents. The deadline for submission of the self-study report is July 27, 2021 with the ATS visit set for September 27 – 30, 2021. The Board will have a shorter meeting in late August to prepare for the site visit.

**The Governance Committee, Mark Faulkner, Chair**

- The four- year assessment of President Blair is underway. The President submitted his report with the goals achieved over his time with the school. Meanwhile, the Governance Committee sent out a survey to the Administration, Faculty, Staff, Student representatives, the Board of Trustees, and other stakeholders in the school that included donors and alumni. The anonymous responses to the survey have been received and the Governance Committee is preparing a report of the survey for the Board of Trustees.
- The Governance Committee continues to seek racial-ethnic diversity on the Board of Trustees and is in the process of securing new people for invitation by the Board.

**The Resource Committee, Linda Shipman, Chair**

- The Resource Committee reported that over the past four years Saint Paul has gone from a survival mode to one of stability and now to one of active growth.
- Saint Paul has no debt and in every budget item this past year we have had more revenue than expense.

- Our revenue is diverse with each of our four major sources making up about one-fourth of the budget.
- Currently, we are drawing only 4% from our endowment, which meets our budgetary needs, but also allows the endowment to grow.
- In anticipation of market volatility, the school withdrew funds from the endowment at a strategic time, giving the school cash when the value of our endowment was at a financial peak.
- We now offer to every student a fifty percent tuition discount.

#### **The Strategic Planning and Evaluation Committee, Amy Hogan and Dustin Petz, Co-Chairs**

- Over the past year the SPEC prioritized Goal #2 (recruitment and retention of a diverse student body) and Goal #8 (collaboration and partnership with other institutions and agencies) from the Saint Paul Strategic Plan, 2017 – 2025.
- Work on both goals has focused, in part, on key performance indicators and developing metrics for evaluating the level of achievement of them as well as seeking realization of these goals.
- At the October 2020 Board meeting, upon recommendation by the SPEC, Goal #3 and Goal #5 from The Saint Paul Strategic Plan 2017 – 2025 were named as priorities for the coming year. Goal #3 calls for Saint Paul to employ faculty that address the changing realities of church and world. Goal #5 states that Saint Paul will create an environment of cultural awareness, diversity, equality, and social justice on its campuses and other learning environments. Goal #5 is in keeping with President Blair's recent call for racial justice to become a major priority for the school.
- School performance is tracked by means of monthly reports on key issues related to the health of the seminary. Known as KPIs (Key Performance Indicators), these include financial expense/income, recruitment progress/retention, academic update assessments/reports, governance work, and related areas. At our last Board meeting all KPIs were rated in the green, meaning excellent reports in all areas.

#### **The Trust and Collaboration Task Force, Rotating Facilitators**

Upon recommendation by the Executive Committee, the Board established a task force to work on issues of collaboration and trust in the school. The task force has now met three times examining the question of what we say and what we do, suggesting that we work on developing integrity between these claims and our subsequent actions. This is a matter not only of the values we teach and learn, but also of the institutional practices that shape our lives together. Racial justice within the institution is basic to this work, and the task force will address other issues of collaboration and trust as well. Presently, the task force is in the process of finding a consultant to work with us on these important matters.

#### **That Great Cloud of Witnesses**

With sadness we report the passing of Don Beets and Carolyn Thornton, two long-time supporters of Saint Paul. Don served on the Board and was a Life Member who was ever ready to be there for the school; and Carolyn, and husband Lester who preceded her in death, were major advocates of rural ministry for over fifty years and were instrumental in establishing the town and country chair at Saint Paul.

#### **A Final Word**

I continue to be amazed at the prodigious amount of work being done at the school and of its high quality. It is an honor and a privilege to be associated with this effort. These are the days when we have greater opportunities to fulfill the mission of Saint Paul. Please pray for us and ask God to lead us and to provide divine presence and power in our work together.

Grace and Peace,

Tex Sample, Chair