

November 15, 2018

Dear Strategic Plan Steering Committee and University Community,

As the chair of the Board of Trustees and the president of Seattle University, we would like to express our support of your development of a strategic plan for the five year period beyond the current year. We consider this the most important undertaking of the year and we want to express our gratitude to you as the members of the Strategic Plan Steering Committee and to the whole university for your generosity in engaging in this endeavor. We look forward to being in dialogue with you as you develop this plan, to offering our own insights, and to our eventual official approval of the plan for the guidance of the university.

We thought it would be important and helpful at this time for us to articulate some **parameters for planning** which we see as essential for framing your deliberations within the stated mission of the university. These parameters pertain to the character of the university which we hold in trust and guide. Please consider them as a foundation for and a contribution to your work.

We are a university experiencing the challenges of all of higher education today. The choices we make in our strategic planning must take into full account the issues facing higher education of access and affordability, student success through graduation, the impact and opportunities of technology, the need for greater distinctiveness in a more competitive environment, increasing university-wide costs, assured preparation for careers, changing demographics, and the questioning of the value proposition of a university education.

We are a Jesuit university. The Jesuit tradition of education is the most important character and asset of Seattle University. Our way of education is Jesuit with its intellectual rigor, bold engagement with issues of justice, foundational core curriculum, emphasis on values and spirituality, personal care of all students, and formation of alumni who discern their life choices in service of others. It is in light of the fact that we are sponsored by the Society of Jesus that we are a Catholic university with the enrichments and commitments being a Catholic university entails. The essential dimensions of Jesuit education, building on all we have done in the past, should inform and give shape to all aspects of the strategic plan for our future.

We are a university of academic quality. Our central or primary purpose is the academic learning of our students under the direction and responsibility of the faculty assisted by staff colleagues. As our mission document states: “We value excellence in learning with great teachers who are active scholars.” Nothing in the strategic plan is more important than the

assurance and advancement of our academic quality and the support of the faculty and staff for carrying out this central academic purpose.

We are a university that prioritizes the total experience of students. As a Jesuit university we hold that the experience of students in service, leadership, social and residential life, psychological and healthy well-being, spiritual exploration, athletics, campus activities, etc. are essential to their development and need to be integrated and mutually supportive with their academic learning.

We are a university that seeks to be guided by shared governance. Seattle University is a stronger and healthier university if all members – faculty, staff, administrators, students -- have a voice and role in decision-making which is appropriate to them within the overall authority of the Board of Trustees. The development of collaboration, accountability, and transparency, with clearer documentation of roles and responsibilities, will assure greater shared governance and a better educational university community characterized by mutually supportive collegueship.

We are a university committed to inclusive excellence and diversity. It is fundamental to us as an educational institution committed to justice and equity that all members of our university community be accepted, recognized, supported, and positively related to in the reality of their persons, races, identities, backgrounds, views and commitments. Inclusive excellence and diversity must be evident in all dimensions, roles, and activities of the university.

We are a comprehensive university. A very significant determinant of the kind of university we are and a great strength within the context of higher education today is the range of our academic programs and levels of our education: undergraduate (with significant numbers of transfer students), graduate, and Law, as well as new on-line programs. It is important that the university support and see itself as being comprehensive in these ways.

We are a university at the center of Seattle. Much of the attraction, vitality, kind of academic programs, focus on issues, available resources and opportunities, and community engagement of our university depend on our location in and relation to Seattle and its metropolitan region. Few universities have the educational opportunities and possible partnerships on which to build as we do by reason of being at the heart of Seattle.

We are a Division-I intercollegiate athletic university. The enrollment of students, their experience of Seattle U, our visibility and reputation more widely, the participation of community members, and the engagement with our alumni is significantly enhanced by

performing in athletics at the highest level. The university should continue to foster this dimension and assure the facilities and the support needed for the attainment of our intercollegiate athletic goals for the sake of the betterment of the whole university.

We are a financially responsible university. The many choices we face as a university require that we make them fully aware of their financial dimensions and consequences. We cannot do everything we want to do, so we must choose what to do, what not to do, and what trade-offs to make in order to act responsibly within our limited financial resources. Our strategic plan must be supported by a clear financial plan which assures the success and the realism of the elements of the plan.

As the chair of the Board of Trustees and the president of the university, after review and discussion with the Board, we offer these parameters for planning as a foundation for the choices you will make in the elaboration of the strategic plan as you set the direction of the university for the years to come. We again thank you for undertaking this exciting and promising endeavor in collaboration and consultation with the whole university and we look forward to engaging with you during the year as you develop the strategic plan and propose it for our approval.

With gratitude,

Nicole W. Piasecki  
Chair, Board of Trustees

Stephen V. Sundborg, S. J.  
President