

**Rev. Stephen Sundborg, president of Seattle University, stands in the Chapel of St. Ignatius, one of the school's most famous attractions. The chapel, completed in 1997, was named for the man who founded the Society of Jesus, better known as the Jesuits. The chapel's outside reflecting pond (lower right) includes a box of wild grasses that are inset into the pool. The chapel's main altar (lower left) is used for services.**



By Scott Williams

# An Ethical Education

*The Rev. Stephen Sundborg brings a unique ethical approach to leading Seattle University, Washington's largest independent university.*

**IT'S** an unlikely classroom: a tent, the kind weekenders might take to the mountains. And Lantz Rowland is an unlikely professor. Rowland, an unemployed systems programmer, considers the tent his home. That is, if you can call four nylon walls that are moved monthly to a new location around Seattle a home.

Rowland is a resident of Tent City Three, an encampment of 48 tents, which has set up near Seattle University (SU) for a month in February. Laid off years ago from Physio-Control (now part of Medtronic Inc.), Rowland has gone through a long list of hardships, including personal bankruptcy, before landing on the street.

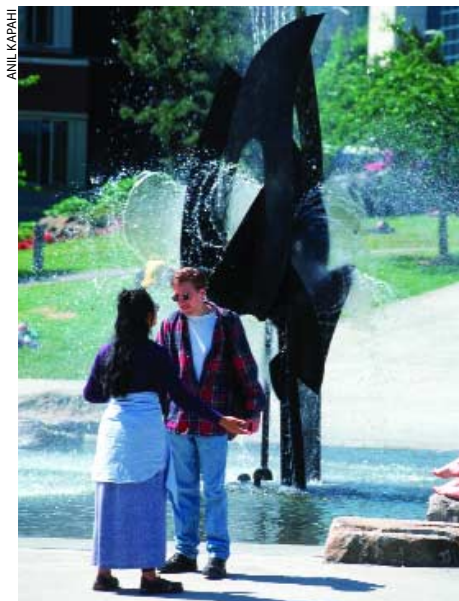
So what makes Rowland a professor? Just like the 80-odd other residents of the temporary encampment, Rowland has something to teach SU students, who will serve up everything from hot meals to legal and health advice to the Tent City residents. He will teach them lessons from the street about the reality of homelessness and about applying their education to real-life situations.

The fact that Tent City would set up on the grounds of SU should come as no surprise to anyone who knows the university. Jesuit-affiliated SU is a different kind of school from, say, nonsectarian universities like the University of Washington or Walla Walla's Whitman College. Although many of SU's courses resemble those of other schools, a strong underpinning of ethical behavior is wrapped into students' entire education there.

## HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

SU is the largest independent university in the Northwest, enrolling a total of 6,810 students in eight programs, including business, education, law, nursing, and theology. While its roots are in the Catholic community, its student body and alumni include people of 10 non-Catholic denominations.

The Rev. Stephen Sundborg currently represents the spiritual and organiza-



Students talk near the Centennial Fountain on Seattle University's popular "Quad" area.

tional heart of the school as its energetic and ebullient leader. The university's 21st president splits his time among duties that might be recognizable to a corporate CEO: fundraising, administration, and public service.

"Someone once said the president of a university is less like a CEO and more like the mayor of a city," says Sundborg, referring to his job of gathering input from a number of constituencies.

In Sundborg's case, those groups include alumni, students, faculty, trustees, the board of regents, and various advisory boards. On the financial side, Sundborg oversees a budget of \$126.3 million. Some 86 percent of that budget is covered by student tuitions. It costs

\$21,185 in tuition and about \$7,000 in room and board to attend SU for a year.

Sundborg took the job as SU president in 1997, after the Rev. William Sullivan had spent 20 years bringing SU back from a period of low enrollment and financial difficulties. Indeed, SU has had its share of turbulent times. The school's two founders (both priests) originally took over a small parish school at the intersection of Broadway and Madison Street near the base of First Hill. The school was rechartered in 1898 as Seattle College and granted its first bachelor's degrees in 1909. Enrollment was low, however, and the situation worsened as World War I and well-paying jobs in Seattle shipyards siphoned away potential students.

## EXPANDING THE STUDENT BODY

Suffering from an identity crisis as both prep school and college, Seattle College offered no degrees from 1919 to 1925. After it separated the two schools, attendance picked up. But it soon found itself embroiled in a new controversy — involving women. Part of the reason attendance was so good was that Seattle College enrolled women, a practice not officially sanctioned by the Society of Jesus (as Jesuits are formally known), until 20 years later. The crisis reached leaders of the Catholic Church in Rome before ending in a stalemate.

During the 1930s, enrollment continued to increase, and several new departments, including nursing, were started. That department was called on during World War II, when it sent nurses to outfit an Army hospital, known as the Fighting 50th, in Europe. That group set up a 1,500-bed hospital behind the lines during D-Day.

After the war, GI Bill-funded exsoldiers swelled the ranks at Seattle College again, and the name was changed to Seattle University in 1948. During the '50s, growth continued, and SU began to gain national recognition, most notably

through its basketball team, which, led by star Elgin Baylor, reached the NCAA championship in 1958.

In the late '60s and early '70s, trouble began again. Student anti-war protests culminated in the bombing of two buildings and the torching of a third. Meanwhile, financial difficulties, sparked by the untimely construction of a \$3.6 million residence hall that remained half empty, caused enrollment to fall off.

But in 1976, Sullivan took over as president, and he turned SU around by instituting a corporate-style management structure, cutting costs, and conducting a successful fundraising campaign. That money formed the basis for a large endowment and helped SU to establish a strong academic reputation, which remains today. In 1993 it acquired the University of Puget Sound's law school, eventually moving it from Tacoma into new quarters on the SU campus. *U.S. News & World Report* recently ranked SU among the top 10 schools in the West that offer a full range of master's and undergraduate programs.

## COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Along with an impressive list of academic programs, SU features a continuing education program designed specifically for mid- to senior-level business executives.

The Executive Leadership Certificate Program is an eight-month program — offered through SU's Albers School of Business and Economics — that teaches courses on issues such as vision and ethics. Executives from The Boeing Co., Weyerhaeuser Co., Costco Wholesale Corp., Expeditors International of Washington Inc., and Foss Maritime Co. are among those who have graduated from the program, says director Marilyn Gist. "The focus is on inner development and outreach, on values, a sense of purpose and ethics," she explains. The group also gets involved with the community, such as when it helped to create a profitable business model for a nonprofit group in the University District that helps homeless teenagers.

Sundborg sees public service as a big part of SU's role in the community, and as a big part of his job. His benevolence extends beyond his career: On February 1, he took over as chair of the board of directors of United Way of King County. That board includes many prominent civic leaders.

But, as the head of a faith-based college, Sundborg also brings a strong spiritual component to his job. "I don't think of myself as a CEO, in terms of an executive

# NURSING A PROGRAM TO SUCCESS

A generous donation will help Dean Mary Walker expand Seattle University's cutting-edge College of Nursing.



**Mary Walker, the dean of Seattle University's College of Nursing, has built a top-quality program.**

Receiving a gift of \$5 million would give a boost to any college program.

And it certainly has done just that at Seattle University's (SU) College of Nursing, where Dean Mary Walker recently received such a gift from a donor whose identity has not been made public. The gift will be used by Walker to expand the program.

"This is a transformational gift for us," she says. "It will let us do a whole lot of stuff . . . like expanding the real capability of the school" rather than having to work within the limits set by tuition-based funding alone.

Walker, who is known for her vision and leadership, has already been hard at work transforming the program. Since she became dean of the nursing school five years ago, she has increased the number of students enrolled by nearly 70 percent.

But with the \$5 million, Walker is embarking on even greater plans. For starters, she expects to add 100 undergraduate and graduate students, expanding on the College of Nursing's current enrollment of 380 undergraduates and 60 graduate students.

And she will oversee moving the college's "learning lab" from the SU main campus at the base of First Hill to new quarters on Swedish Medical Center's Providence Campus. That lab teaches nurses-to-be what it is really like in the trenches, giving them hands-on experience in a real-life setting with essential skills like suturing, reading an electro-cardiogram and monitoring critically injured students, says Walker.

The lab will move into 12,000 square feet in the James Life Sciences Building on Capitol Hill, owned by developer David Sabey. The lab currently occupies just 3,500 square feet at SU.

## SOCIAL JUSTICE BASIS

A native of Michigan, Walker had 15 years of experience directing university nursing programs at other schools before she joined SU's program in 2000. She says she is particularly proud of the way SU is different from those other schools because it involves its young nurses in programs that teach them to base many of their decisions on experience with "social justice."

For instance, once students finish their entry-level schooling, some are assigned to a housing project run by the Seattle Housing Authority, where they work closely with residents on health issues specific to that project. One group of students worked with residents to overcome problems with asthma, which can be particularly acute in close inner city settings.

Another group helped a group of Somali refugees overcome language barriers and identify ingredients for rigid requirements in some of their culinary recipes. The \$5-million gift will help expand such community efforts.

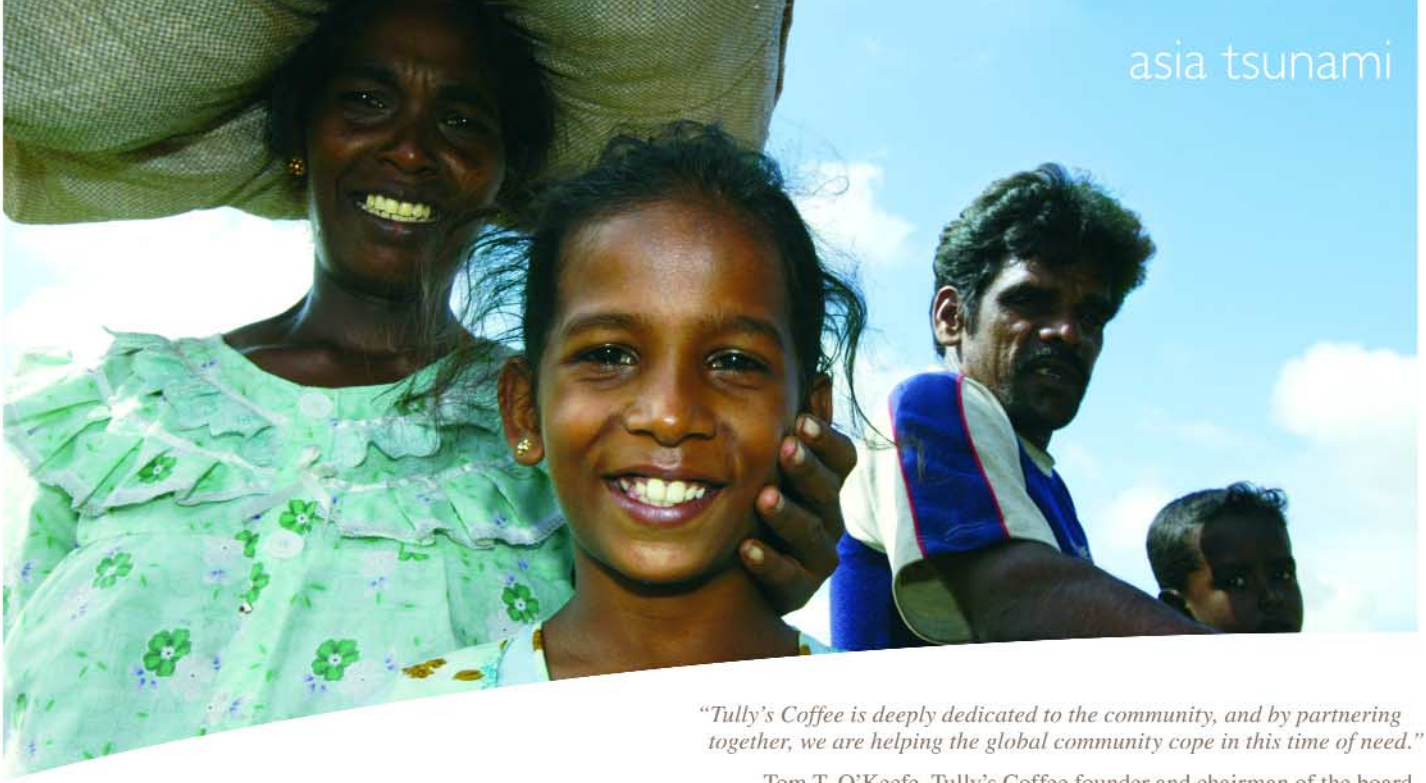
Walker says the gift will allow taking advantage of a "short window of change—if you think about how slowly things can work in academia," says Walker.

— Scott Williams

function. I think of myself as a priest, as a Jesuit, as an articulator of a vision, and kind of a cheerleader for Seattle U," he says, adding, "I have this sense that most university presidents are forced into a job that is too corporate, too much an executive. That's just not me."

Sundborg has one additional role: spokesman for the Catholic community in Seattle. "Other than the archbishop [Alex Brunett], I am most called on to represent Catholics in the public eye," he says.

Sundborg draws praise from many on campus and around the state. SU graduate



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—Tom T. O'Keefe, Tully's Coffee founder and chairman of the board

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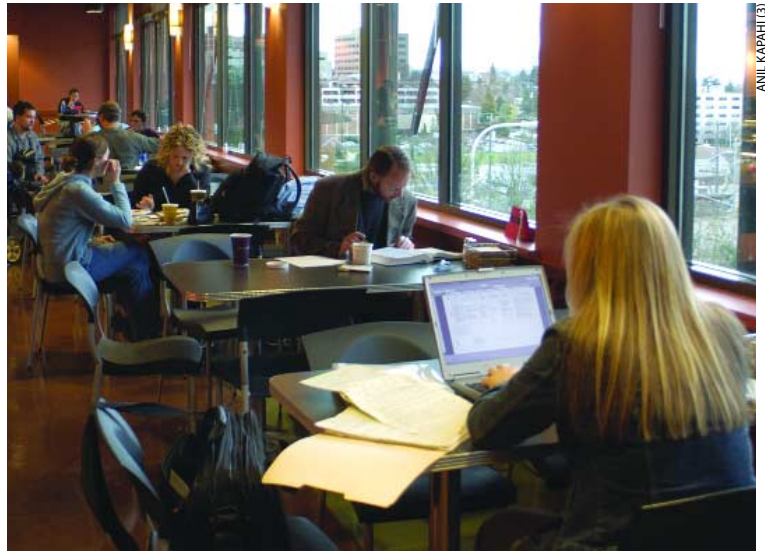
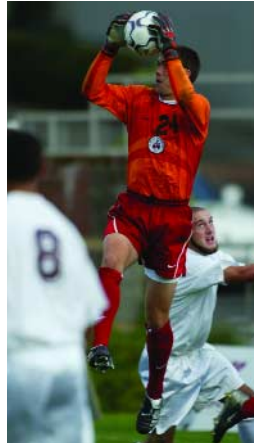
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*Placement for this ad was generously donated by Washington CEO magazine.*



**Seattle University is home to Tent City Three (above). Students talk and study at the Seattle University's new student center on campus (far right). The university also boasts the NCAA Division 2 National Men's Soccer Champions (at right).**



ANIL KAPATHI (3)

and now-trustee John Meisenbach, president of Meisenbach Capital Management of Seattle, sees it this way: "The primary job of the president is to provide vision, strategic planning, and [to] coordinate relationships between students, faculty, and alumni. Like in any business, your greatest asset is your employees. Nurturing professors and teachers is a huge part of his job, and he does a very good job of it." Sundborg's contact with students is up-front and personal, Meisenbach continues, adding that he knows many of them by name.

### SCHOOL SPIRITUALITY

Sundborg's religious credentials are vast. A native of Portland, he entered the Jesuit order in 1961, when he was 18 years old. He attended a Jesuit prep school in Maryland, and then a Jesuit university (Gonzaga). He holds bachelor's and master's degrees in philosophy and a doctorate in spirituality. For the six years prior to accepting the presidential position at SU, he headed the Jesuits' five-state Pacific Northwest region, leading what he calls "365 utterly independent and seriously overeducated Jesuits who all — supposedly — have a vow to obey you."

Much of the school's attitude is based on its foundations in the Jesuit religious order within the Catholic church. Since the school was founded in 1891, it has followed the principles laid out by the Society of Jesus. That means providing an education that develops the whole student — spiritually, as well as intellectually and physically.

Part of the Jesuit tradition is education, evidenced by the 28 Jesuit universities across the United States. The 20,000 Jesuits worldwide shun the monastic

lifestyle of some Catholic orders, choosing instead direct involvement with the victims of social problems such as "poverty, injustice, discrimination, violence and the environment," according to the SU website.

One of the school's core values, as outlined in its mission statement, is to "foster a concern for justice and the competence to promote it." Welcoming Tent City Three to the campus is part of that educational experience.

### WALKING THE WALK

Another example of teaching students to "walk the talk" when it comes to promoting justice is the school's International Development Internship Program. Through that program, 15 students a year go through a curriculum lasting three academic quarters and become involved closely with a foreign country.

In Nicaragua, faculty and staff have visited a Jesuit school called University of Central America at Managua (Nicaragua's capital), working through the school to establish a liaison with the community. They then used micro lending, as well as interactions with the legal system, the courts, and the jails, to help the faculty and staff develop practical ways of spreading justice.

Closer to home, courses like "Poverty in America" not only teach about poverty, but are engaged with Seattle-area shelters and other aid agencies. Through these programs, students and faculty are "experiencing the actual condition of people's lives, then applying their education to that," explains Sundborg.

With ethics becoming such a hot button in American business following scandals at companies like Enron and WorldCom, where do ethics fit into SU's concentration on justice? Instead of providing a direct answer, Sundborg asks, "How much of the current rage around ethics will become a desire for justice in corporate America?"

When the SU president holds conversations with business leaders about justice, or ethics, they "become a little uncomfortable," he says. "There is an increasing focus on justice" in the workplace. But, "if you raise that too forcefully in a business, people will say, 'Would you please stick to your job.'"

The involvement of SU in the economy of Washington state is remarkable. A list of 1,126 SU grads who are company owners, presidents, or senior officers crosses all industry lines, from banking to brewing, software to shipping.

### COMMUNITY INFLUENCE

The school's influence reaches deep into other areas of the state's society, too — particularly in education, medicine, and law.

Sundborg notes that his five years spent earning a doctorate in Christian spirituality have had a strong influence over the way he does his job.

"A primary interest of mine is spirituality. I keep that sense of spirituality about me in my work as president of this university. It works if you are faithful to your way of doing it," he says, adding, "What I do comes out of being a reflective person. It's about taking the time to be quiet, to find the meaning in things. I live in that mode as president, just as I always have."

*Scott Williams is senior editor at Washington CEO magazine.*