



MISSION EXAMEN SELF STUDY EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Process.

Seattle University marks its 125th anniversary by undertaking, in the spirit of its founding vision, a Mission Examen review. Under the direction of the AJCU Examen Coordinating Committee, and at the request of the Superior General of the Jesuits, Seattle University entered into the Mission Examen process in the 2016–17 academic year.

President Stephen V. Sundborg, S.J. appointed a Mission Examen Chair and a 15-person Mission Examen Planning Committee made up of administrators, faculty, staff, and students (roster attached). The Committee facilitated a series of input sessions to allow various segments of the campus community to reflect on what they see as Seattle U’s mission strengths and mission challenges. The Planning Committee then used the data from these sessions, along with additional research, to draft the self-study document. The dominant mission strengths and mission challenges identified are included in this Executive Summary. The process is capped by the visit of the external peer review committee on February 15–17.

More than 400 members of the University community participated in input sessions, including trustees, administrators, faculty, staff, students, and alumni. Participants in the input groups received a copy of the 2010 AJCU document “[Some Characteristics of Jesuit Colleges and Universities: A Self-Evaluation Instrument](#)” along with a list of the seven characteristics as modified by the Committee to more accurately reflect the University’s conception of its mission (see attached). The Committee asked each group to address two questions: (1) “*What are the ways in which the spirit of our Jesuit, Catholic Mission finds expression in the life of Seattle University with regard to these seven characteristics?*”(2) “*What are the challenges we face as we seek to grow in the expression of our Jesuit, Catholic mission?*” Facilitators recorded the responses, which were entered into a matrix that broke out the responses according to the seven characteristics.

But the Self-Study is more than a recording of what was said. The input sessions, while valuable and informative, do not constitute an adequate reflection of where the university community as a whole stands. A more scientifically designed instrument would be needed to determine that. The crafters of the Self-Study document, all thoroughly familiar with the dynamics of the University, have appealed to their own knowledge and experience as well as to what they have heard during the input sessions.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF DOMINANT MISSION STRENGTHS AND MISSION CHALLENGES

MISSION STRENGTHS:

1. Pervasive recognition and embrace of the University's mission.

The University's faculty, staff, and students, especially those who have come to SU from other institutions of higher education, comment on the pervasiveness of mission awareness. Accreditation bodies, consultants, and program reviewers note the phenomenon. Some employees from the University Services area spoke of a friendliness and lack of aggressive behavior they had not found until coming to Seattle University. For others, the sensitivity to service and issues relating to social justice best typifies the mission consciousness. For still others it is the atmosphere of inclusiveness and respect for individual conscience. Many place a high value on the religious inspiration of the University and the broadness of that inspiration.

2. Integration of aspects of the Catholic, Jesuit character throughout the academic, co-curricular, and operational dimensions of the university.

The University's academic programs integrate the traditional Catholic, Jesuit commitments to philosophical and theological studies as well as more contemporary practices, such as service-learning, global awareness—including opportunities for foreign study—social analysis, and diversity studies. The University keeps alive the long Jesuit educational tradition of augmenting its commitment to traditional disciplines and the cumulative wisdom it has inherited by incorporating new areas of development opening up in our times.

3. A high level of service, social justice, and global awareness among faculty, staff, and students.

The University's commitment to these aspects of its mission is pervasive. Two examples illustrate the commitment. First is the **Seattle University Youth Initiative**, mentioned often in the input sessions. This program, recognized by President Obama, serves at-risk students in the neighborhood adjacent to the University's southern border. The program offers service-learning opportunities for SU students by providing learning-enhancement activities for the public primary, middle, and high school students in our area. The second example of the University's commitment is offered through the Center for Jesuit Education's Endowed Mission Fund. This fund allows as many as twenty or thirty faculty and staff to sponsor creative activities in the U.S. and abroad to help people living on the margins of society.

4. Collaboration among Jesuits and lay faculty and staff in providing programs to enhance awareness of and commitment to the University's Catholic, Jesuit identity.

This collaboration is pervasive in the university community and serves as the focus of the University's Center for Jesuit Education and its Institute for Catholic Thought and

Culture. This array of programs has had a transformative effect on both Jesuits and lay companions on campus. These programs and activities constitute one of the principal ways in which the University comes to terms with the diminishing presence of Jesuits on campus. The growing number of lay leaders on campus at the same time that the number of Jesuits is decreasing can be attributed in large measure to these efforts.

5. The University's commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion, and institutional integrity.

The importance of this area has been growing during recent years, at Seattle University as well as in other universities throughout the country. It is clear that the promise of the Civil Rights Movement is far from being realized. Racial sensitivity, interreligious awareness, and issues surrounding gender have grown, not lessened, in importance. Defects in our own performance in these areas have moved the University to face these challenges. Attention to these aspects of our university culture promise to continue in coming years and the University is prepared to learn and to honor its commitments.

MISSION CHALLENGES:

1. Maintaining the University's commitment to the Catholic, Jesuit character of the University during the next twenty-five years and beyond.

The University finds itself in the midst of an era of change that continues to challenge its Catholic, Jesuit identity. The aging of Jesuits who, from the beginning, have played and continue to play such an important role in maintaining what President Sundborg has called "the soul of the University," will require ever greater attention to the development of lay commitment to the Catholic, Jesuit character of the University and lay leadership throughout the University. Part of this commitment must be the claiming of our Catholic and Jesuit character as pervasive in all areas of the University, not just the theology faculties and Campus Ministry.

2. Increased intentionality in mission-focused hiring, promotion and development for faculty and staff, and clear communication of our Jesuit Catholic mission. Within the multifaceted religious context of Seattle and the Pacific Northwest, Seattle University has a unique challenge to maintain our Jesuit Catholic heritage and mission, even as we embrace a diversity of religious experiences in our faculty, staff and students. What is the best way to communicate this reality to prospective students and parents, to prospective faculty and staff employees, and to the broader public? What are the best ways for us to preserve our founding religious inspiration, while continuing to welcome the rich diversity of students, faculty and staff who compose our community, with a special attention to our hiring and promotion/development practices?

3. Polarization between the administration and some elements of the university community calls for increased efforts to build procedures of mutual listening, respect, and openness as we face together a challenging future in higher education.

At the beginning of his *Spiritual Exercises*, Ignatius of Loyola lays out an important guiding principle:

That both the giver and the receiver of the Spiritual Exercises may be of greater help and benefit to each other, it should be supposed that every good Christian [and every person of good will] ought to be more eager to put a good interpretation on a neighbor's statement than to condemn it. Further, if one cannot interpret it favorably, one should ask how the other person means it. If that meaning is wrong, one should correct the person with love; and if this is not enough, one should search every appropriate means through which, by understanding the statement in a good way, it may be saved.

In order to move forward in the directions the University needs to go, it must go as a community of love and respect. Profound differences of judgment will still exist in such a community but they will be held together by the understanding that people committed to the same good end may look toward different means of realizing the goal. Such an understanding rejects the rules of engagement that characterize so much of the social and political exchange that take place in public life.

4. **In this era of social change, the University must continue to build its capacity to engage with students, faculty, and staff on timely issues of transparency and effectiveness.** University leadership needs to recognize the new activism of students, staff, and faculty as being grounded in a sincere commitment to the University's Catholic, Jesuit mission and find ways to continue this conversation.
5. **A recurring challenge heard in the input sessions of fall 2016 is the strain put on university life, student access, and program support by limited financial resources.** People who spoke highly of the educational opportunities made available at the University lamented the fact that many students who could most profit from these opportunities are denied access by lack of financial resources. The University is squeezed in its operational resources, students are squeezed during their time here and as they move out from the University with their degrees, and some simply can't get in the doors.



SEATTLE UNIVERSITY

Mission Examen

Campus Committee Roster

1. Peter Ely, S.J. (Chair)*
2. Allison Golden (Senior Aide to the President)*
3. Terri Clark, VP, Academic Assembly and Associate Professor, College of Nursing
4. Marc Cohen, Assistant Professor, Albers School of Business
5. Rick Fehrenbacher, Dean, School of New and Continuing Studies
6. Lotchie Kerch, Graduate Student Representative
7. David Leigh, S.J., Professor of English; Center for Jesuit Education; Core Curriculum*
8. Tammy Liddell, Director of Campus Ministry
9. Claire Lucas, Undergraduate Student Representative
10. Natasha Martin, Chief Diversity Officer
11. Joe Orlando, Director, Center for Jesuit Education*
12. Catherine Punsalan, Assoc. Prof and Director, Institute for Catholic Thought and Culture
13. Jen Tilghman-Havens, Associate Director, Center for Jesuit Education *
14. Janet Shandley, Director of Graduate Admissions (Enrollment)
15. Dion Wade, Director of University Recreation (Student Development)

*Steering Committee

Peer Review Committee Roster

1. Eileen Burke-Sullivan (Vice Provost, Mission and Ministry, Creighton)
2. Bob Caro, S.J. (VP for Mission, LMU)
3. Patricia O'Connell Killen (Academic Vice President, Gonzaga)
4. Ed Peck (VP, University Mission and Identity, John Carroll)

Peer Review Committee Visit

February 16–17, 2017



SEATTLE UNIVERSITY

Mission Examen

Some Characteristics of Jesuit Colleges and Universities: A Seattle University Self-Evaluation Instrument

Seattle University's Mission Examen will focus on these seven characteristics of our mission, which are modified from the AJCU self-evaluation instrument, "Some Characteristics of Jesuit Colleges and Universities"

1. Leadership's Commitment to the Mission
2. The Academic Life
3. A Catholic Jesuit Campus Culture Committed to Formation and Education of the Whole Person
4. Service, Social Justice and Global Engagement
5. Service to the Local Church and a Connection to the Wider Global Church
6. Jesuit Presence and Lay Leadership Formation
7. University Commitment to Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, and Institutional Integrity