



[About SPU](#)

[Mission, Signatures, & Vision](#)

[Our History](#)

[Statement of Faith](#)

[Seattle & Pacific Northwest](#)

[The Campus](#)

[SPU Facts](#)

[Office of the President](#)

[University Leadership](#)

[University Leadership](#)

[Press Room](#)

[News](#)

[Events Temp](#)

[Events](#)

[Community Resources](#)

Signatures

Can a university change the world? Yes! But we have to understand who we are. Signature commitments must be clear to everyone.

If we are going to achieve our distinctive vision to engage the culture and change the world, we must know clearly who we are, what we are doing, and where we are going. What are the signature commitments for our university? What does our vision really mean, concretely, as we go about our work day in and day out?

In 2014: A Blueprint for Excellence, we articulate five signature commitments that will guide our actions and choices over the next 10 years. In all of our planning, we held the conviction that we must define, clearly and distinctly, the deeper patterns of what we are all about. We believe we need this intense focus. Any organization needs such focus. We need clarity of purpose in order to sharpen our strategy. In the end, the measure of our success will be how well we live up to these signatures.

It is just this combination of signatures that defines who we are as a university. Coupled with our unique vision, we suspect that no other institution would own or adopt just this combination. This is who we are.

SIGNATURE 1

Seattle Pacific University will be a place that knows and understands what's going on in the world.

Sometimes people imagine that a college or university should be like a monastery: isolated, insulated from the volatile goings on in the world, a perfect, protected place to learn.

We think this is absolutely the wrong model for a university in our time. An intellectual ghetto will not do, a cloistered place where we talk only to ourselves and to other academics. As a Christian university, we cannot indulge in the false comfort of Christian separatism. We have to be in the mix.

Seattle Pacific University must portray genuine openness, fearless engagement, confident encounter. This means connected research, a scholarship of engagement. It means sending students out into the city, in service, for internships, ensuring that our graduates are equipped to negotiate the great cities around the globe. It means tackling head-on the tough issues of the day. It means bringing all kinds of people into our midst. It means taking risks.

We seek to live and do our work as a university right out there where the world loves and suffers and thrives and fears.

SIGNATURE 2

“My dream is that SPU students will be trained to carry a holistic gospel, a gospel that saves, reconciles, and empowers people, especially the poor and oppressed of the world.”

John Perkins
 Reconciliation Advocate and
 Partner with SPU in the John
 Perkins Center for
 Reconciliation

Seattle Pacific University will be a place that embraces the Christian story, becoming biblically and theologically educated.

The great Jewish novelist Chaim Potok once said on our campus that we live in a world of colliding stories. That is an apt metaphor for postmodernism. One of the fierce contentions of our contemporary world, and indeed of today's university, is that there is no big, overarching story that can help make sense of it all.

Here is where our vision boldly engages the culture. In a world of colliding stories, we embrace the Christian story. One of our strong signatures is to make the case for the big story of the gospel. That's the good news we have to offer.

In the language of the Scriptures, we want to make the case for the hope we find within us, and we will do so with courtesy and kindness and respect for others. We commit ourselves to the hard work, the discipline, of becoming biblically and theologically educated. We seek to take this growing maturity into all of the disciplines of the University, into our worship, and into our work.

In a day of growing biblical and theological illiteracy, we think this commitment to growth, for faculty, staff, students, trustees, alumni, is critical if we are going to embrace the Christian story and engage the culture with good news.

SIGNATURE 3

Seattle Pacific University will be a place that masters the tools of rigorous learning, becoming a vibrant intellectual community.

We are not a church. We are a university. That means our vision rests on a commitment to rigorous learning. That means our focus is on equipping ourselves and our graduates with broad learning and with mastery in a discipline.

All across our campus we are asking these fundamental questions of the academy: How do people learn? How does the brain learn? We commit ourselves to being on this cutting edge. When it comes to learning, we commit ourselves to innovation. We will align our learning outcomes with our vision, build our curriculum around those goals, and commit to appropriate and thorough assessment.

We are saying here that we love the life of the mind. We love ideas. We love the vibrancy of intellectual exchange and discussion and debate. We are a university through and through. Inside and outside the classroom, we declare ourselves a learning community.

And while this venture is exciting and dynamic in and of itself, our special question, driven by our vision, is this: What do we do with our learning? With this signature, we affirm that deep learning is the best way to change the world.

SIGNATURE 4

Seattle Pacific University will be a place that models grace-filled community and practices radical reconciliation.

We share a deep commitment at Seattle Pacific University: We want to treat each other with respect, care, kindness, and civility. We call this grace-filled community. In some ways, it's an unusual way for a university to do its work

these days.

We are dangerously divided in our world today. Some of this dividedness comes in the form of barbed wire and concrete, some of it with razor-sharp language. We live in a broken world, a human community broken up by walls everywhere.

The great poet Robert Frost says, “Before I built a wall I’d ask to know/ What I was walling in or walling out,/ And to whom I was like to give offense./ Something there is that doesn’t love a wall,/ That wants it down.” This signature says that we are committed to reaching across the barriers of race and ethnicity; we are determined to address the fierce battles among ideologies, separation by class, and stratification by education. This means too we will be in conversation with other religions.

With this signature, we make the radical assertion that everyone is created in God’s image, and as we live out this assertion, we believe we are contributing to a better world.

SIGNATURE 5

Seattle Pacific University will be a place that graduates people of competence and character equipped to change the world.

What kind of graduates will change the world? To start with, they will have to be highly competent, disciplined, having mastered an area of study yet still capable of thinking out of the box. They must be smart, savvy, innovative. They must be curious and eager learners, long after their formal education ends.

But competence without character is a deeply flawed goal of education. The sociologist James Davison Hunter says that “character matters ... because without it, trust, justice, freedom, community, and stability are probably impossible.” But frighteningly, Hunter goes on to say, “character is dead” in our culture, “its time has passed.” Our educational institutions no longer teach it, because our culture can no longer decide what it is.

We believe character formation does indeed take place during the college years. And so we had better be intentional about it. This is not easy work, because the culture does not always support sorting out right from wrong, serving the common good, attention to the poor, deep respect for others, seeing the big picture. We commit to this work, waning in so many circles, because we believe only graduates of this sort will ultimately make the world a better place.

3307 3rd Ave West, Seattle WA 98119-1997 [\[MAP\]](#)
206-281-2000 | [Contact](#) | [Emergency Info](#)

[Connect With Us](#)

Founded in 1891, Seattle Pacific University is a leading Christian university that equips people to engage the culture and change the world. [Learn more](#)