



2024 – 2027 Saint Paul School of Theology Strategic Plan

God has told you, O mortal, what is good;
and what does the LORD require of you
but to do justice, and to love kindness,
and to walk humbly with your God? (Micah 6:8, NRSV)

Saint Paul School of Theology's 2024-2027 strategic plan seeks to promote justice, kindness, and humility by striving for "the beloved community," responding to the changing needs of the church, diversifying our enrollment, and providing the financial resources necessary to prepare our students for "innovative, creative ministry." Recognizing that all strategic plans rely on the time, energy, and creativity of faculty, staff, and trustees, the Executive Leadership Team will assess annually progress on each point in the plan and share the results of that assessment with those constituencies. In consultation with these groups and with the approval of the Board of Trustees, this plan may be revised annually as a result of those assessments. Data from the 2023-2024 academic year will be utilized as the baseline for measuring progress. Similarly, as work on the plan progresses and objectives are attained, items included in the Appendix may be moved into the appropriate goal for pursuit and implementation. Through the utilization of this methodology, Saint Paul will move closer to becoming a community of justice, kindness, and humility.

Goal #1 - Saint Paul, striving to become "the beloved community," will develop a campus culture of belonging, advocacy, justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion (BAJEDI).

Goal #2 - Saint Paul's educational programs will address and respond to the changing contexts of the church and world.

Goal #3 - Saint Paul will strengthen our enrollment management process to reflect our commitment to diversity.

Goal #4 - Saint Paul will engage in a variety of development, fund raising, communication, and promotional activities to support the mission of the seminary.

Goal #1 - Saint Paul, striving to become "the beloved community," will develop a campus culture of belonging, advocacy, justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion (BAJEDI).

Indicators of Effectiveness:

1. Develop a theological framework for Saint Paul's BAJEDI efforts.
 - Cost and/or Allocation Method: Financial demand would increase moderately for marketing of framework.
 - Method: Gather a small but diverse collective of theologians to craft a theological framework that pairs with our mission statement, objectives, and desired culture.
 - Intention: Create a theological framework or foundation supporting our BAJEDI work.
 - Timeline: End of Year 2024.
 - To Achieve: 1) Create a document containing a theological framework for our community culture (BAJEDI) and distribute the framework across all departments and platforms; 2) Develop an institution-wide understanding of the framework and include major tenets in all marketing.
 - Shepherd: Associate Dean of Students and Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean
 - Allies: Members of the Faculty, ELT.

2. Create a culture of trust and safety.

- Cost and/or Allocation Method: Minimal for assessment. Cost of annual professional development training.
- Method: 1) Develop and implement a measurable student assessment specifically for trust and safety; 2) Gather and analyze data from student assessments currently in-place including exit interviews; 3) Create a staff/faculty assessment to provide similar data; 4) Offer annual professional development trainings which include intercultural learning opportunities, training on EQ or emotional intelligence, conflict management/resolution, team building, and communication skills; and 5) produce an annual report documenting activities and progress.
- Intention: Create and sustain a theological and academic atmosphere that is known for trust and safety throughout all departments.
- Timeline: Ongoing. Progress report due by the end of the Academic Year 2025.
- To Achieve: 1) Assess our strengths, weaknesses, areas of growth, and plan an event for training and development; 2) Depending on the results of the assessments, create action plans for correcting areas that impede trust and safety.
- Shepherd: Associate Dean of Students.
- Allies: Trust and Collaboration Committee, Student Council, Executive Director of the Oklahoma Campus, Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean.

3. Draft a monograph documenting the racial history of SPST.

- Cost and/or Allocation Method: Strategic Planning Funds.
- Method: Research, Review Historical Archives, Compile Data, Share Report.
- Intention: 1) Understand our racial history across the institution (board, ELT, staff, faculty, students); 2) Acknowledge the sin of racism as it has been expressed at Saint Paul and engage in an act of repentance.; 3) Raise awareness of history we do not want to repeat; 4) Consciously activate better ways of being in community with all people.
- Timeline: End of the Year 2026.
- To Achieve: 1) Compile a comprehensive racial history of SPST, collated into a report with proposals for action; 2) Share report with Trust and Collaboration Task Force and partner with T&C for an official presentation to SPST; 3) Give the report to all departments.
- Shepherd: Associate Dean of Students.
- Allies: The United Methodist Church Commission on Religion and Race; Trust and Collaboration Committee; Assistant Professor of Ethics, Church, and Society; and Assistant Professor of History of Christianity.

Goal #2 – Saint Paul’s educational programs will address and respond to the changing contexts of the church and world.

Indicators of Effectiveness:

1. Craft innovative offerings to align with the diverse vocations of our prospective and current students and in keeping with Saint Paul’s identity as a justice seeking community.

- Cost and/or Allocation Method: Strategic Planning Funds.
- Method: Use program reviews, Association of Theological Schools (ATS) data, and interviews and focus groups to inform revisions to the Seminary’s degree programs and to identify potential new specializations, e.g. chaplaincy, pastoral care, or technology in ministry. Analysis needs to include faculty resources for each specialization and cost.
- Intention: Create degree offerings that address the diverse needs and interests of prospective and current students.
- Timeline: May 2025 – Identify potential specialization, faculty resources, cost; Complete revision of MDiv and DMin curricula; Fall 2025 – Discussions and Action in curriculum committee of one new MACM and/or

MDiv specialization; Implement new MDiv and DMin curricula; Spring 2026 begin marketing new specialization; Fall 2026 Launch new specialization.

- To Achieve: New or revised degree offerings in Fall 2026.
- Shepherd: Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean.

2. Provide non-degree offerings to alumni, laity, and clergy in their diverse ministry settings.

- Cost and/or Allocation Method: Strategic Planning Funds; then grant funds; then donor funds and partner funds.
- Method: Research the needs of alumni, laity, and clergy that could be fulfilled through non-degree offerings, including reviving the lecture program and providing small group offerings which incorporate themes of justice and the beloved community.
- Intention: Develop programming that is self-sustaining, which will produce a variety of non-degree offerings for alumni, laity, and clergy.
- Timeline: End of 2024 assemble the team; plan for first initiative; Spring-Summer 2025 first initiative; Fall-spring 2025-2026 second initiative and grant proposal.
- To Achieve: Offer programming by summer 2027.
- Shepherd: Executive Director of the Oklahoma campus and the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean.

3. Employ a diverse faculty who has the capacity to reflect upon, respond to, and engage with changing faith communities.

- Cost and/or Allocation Method: Already budgeted.
- Method: Define area of diversity needed among the faculty; identify disciplinary areas of need; utilize faculty, denominational, and other networks to identify potential candidates; explore a bishop-in-residence, who might respond to justice and ecumenical needs.
- Intention: As current faculty retire over the next three years hire an equal number of faculty members who reflects the identified diversities.
- Timeline: Spring 2025 or 2026 – identify areas of need and diversity focus; Summer 2025 or 2026 – post position openings and descriptions; AY 25-26 or 26-27 – search, interview, offer positions; Summer 2026 or 2027 – on-board new faculty.
- To Achieve: Hiring of new faculty by Summer 2027.
- Shepherd: Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean, Chief Financial Officer/Chief Operating Officer, Faculty Council, Faculty Personnel and Steering Committee.

4. Improve student retention and persistence rates.

- Cost and/or Allocation Method: Strategic Planning Funds.
- Method: 1) Review student retention, persistence and completion data from the last ten years, in comparison to national/regional/local rates, and ATS rates; 2) Based on data, taking into consideration our regional areas and trends in theological education, determine an ambitious and achievable goal for each year of this strategic plan; 3) Determine what factors lead to greater retention, persistence and completion rates and evaluate how we can develop or strengthen SPST programs to lean on factors easily identified as leading to success; 4) Consider the development of a mentoring program, starting with an initiative for AME/AMEZ/CME.
- Intention: 1) Students completing their degree program; 2) Implementation of a mentoring program to aid students in attaining their degrees within the completion time stated in the assessment plan.
- Timeline: End of academic year 2024-2025 to establish desired rates. Start of academic year 2025-2026 for mentor program.
- To Achieve: Meet the established goals for retention and persistence year over year.

- Shepherd: Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean, Associate Dean of Student Affairs, Executive Director of Admissions and Communications, and Executive Director of the Oklahoma Campus.
- Allies: Faculty and Staff.

Goal #3 – Saint Paul will strengthen our enrollment management processes to reflect our commitment to diversity.

Indicators of Effectiveness:

1. Increase new student enrollment year over year to reach stable enrollment of 125 students by 2028.
 - Cost and/or Allocation Method: Strategic planning funds if not already budgeted.
 - Method: 1) Increase students in denominations other than United Methodist; 2) Increase number of students from Iowa and Arkansas; 3) Establish and train student recruiting team each year (beginning Summer 2024); 4) Streamline transfer policy (Summer 2024); 5) Strengthen follow-up processes through Populi; 6) Strengthen connection with District Superintendents, Board of Ordained Ministries, and Registrars of targeted conference (UMC specific); 7) Enhance communication channels to prospective students, including social media, printed materials and website offerings.
 - Intention: A healthy enrollment that accounts for loss (graduation, retention, persistence) and shows growth.
 - Timeline: Fall 2025 enrollment = 101; Fall 2026 enrollment = 113; Fall 2027 enrollment = 126; Fall 2028 enrollment = 126 or more.
 - To Achieve: By ATS census date Fall 2028.
 - Shepherd: Executive Director of Admissions and Communications.
 - Allies: Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean, Associate Dean of Student Affairs, Denominational connections.
2. Increase the number of students from traditionally racially and ethnically minoritized groups to comprise 35% by 2028.
 - Cost and/or Allocation Method: 5-10% of Strategic planning funds each year; \$10K/year per student enrolled for scholarship increase.
 - Method: 1) Enroll students in small cohorts (3-5) and provide mentor/advisor for at least year one. As funding allows, increase to full degree program; 2) Create contextually relevant academic and continuing education offerings; 3) Create materials that specifically highlight student support and community offerings for these students; 4) Increase number of full-tuition scholarships available; 5) Identify donor(s) with interest in funding various groups; 5) Expand connections with HBCU campus ministries; 6) Identify and connect with campus ministries with high minoritized group populations.
 - Intention: An increased presence of students from traditionally racially and ethnically minoritized groups, who can thrive throughout their theological journey.
 - Timeline: Identify and connect: Summer 2024 to Fall 2025; Updated materials (ready for recruiting season 2024-2025); Expand connections (recruiting season 2024-2025); Implement cohort model (beginning summer 2026).
 - To Achieve: 30% enrollment by 2026; 35% enrollment by 2028.
 - Shepherd: Executive Director of Admissions and Communications.
 - Allies: Chief Financial Officer, Executive Director of Development, Campus Ministers.
3. Cultivate a culture of relationship and create mentorship programs for a diverse student body.
 - Cost and/or Allocation Method: To be determined.
 - Method: 1) Research and develop culture of relationship model for our context; 2) Research and develop a mentorship program to support student connection within and beyond seminary bounds; 3) Provide forums and on-going training in Emotional Intelligence
 - Intention: Stimulate positive relationship building to construct a safe campus environment for all.

- Timeline: Culture of Relationship (establish model by Summer 2026); Mentor Program (inaugural mentor training Fall 2025; inaugural pairing Summer 2026).
 - To Achieve: First assessment of program deliverables by Summer 2027.
 - Shepherd: Executive Director of Admissions and Communications, Associate Dean of Students, and Executive Director of the Oklahoma Campus.
 - Allies: Chief Financial Officer, Alumni.
4. Increase non-UM denominational diversity to fifteen percent by establishing regional denominational partnerships.
- Cost: Already budgeted.
 - Method: 1) Host listening sessions among non-UMC alumni to assess opportunities for recruiting; 2) Host “Experience Saint Paul days” for denominational leaders; 3) Identify two denominations per year to focus recruiting efforts; 4) Review advanced standing and advanced placement descriptions in relationship to other denominational credentials; 5) Create denominational-specific advertising and marketing campaigns to highlight our academic and community offerings.
 - Intention: Create robust regional partnerships with non-UMC denominations.
 - Timeline: Begin contacts and initiate conversations in Fall 2024.
 - To Achieve: Increase presence of non-UMC students to fifteen percent by Fall 2027.
 - Shepherd: Executive Director of Admissions and Communications.
 - Allies: Executive Director of Development, Alumni.
5. Increase international student enrollment to fifteen percent of the student body and provide support for the unique situation of international students.
- Cost: Review current spending to set baseline.
 - Method: 1) Create a comprehensive plan from recruitment to matriculation specifically for non-US based international students to include funding, housing, and community support; 2) Implement enrollment requirements for students not moving to U.S. to study; 3) Annual review of Financial Certificate to ensure it matches cost of attendance; 4) Quarterly meetings with Saint Paul’s Principal Designated School Official (PDSO, currently Associate Dean of Students); 5) Identify international recruitment opportunities and create three-year travel plans where feasible; 6) Create international student liaisons to help with transitions; and 7) When feasible, hire an International Student Affairs Liaison/Director.
 - Intention: An increased presence of two to three international students per year who can thrive throughout their theological journey.
 - Timeline: Review finances (Summer 2024); Create plans for travel (Summer 2024); Create and implement remaining methods during AY2024-2025 and AY2025-2026.
 - To Achieve: By Fall 2028, attain goal of fifteen percent of student body composed of international students.
 - Shepherd: Executive Director of Admissions and Communications.
 - Allies: President, Executive Director of Development, Alumni Associations, Associate Dean for Student Affairs.

Goal #4 - Saint Paul will engage in a variety of development, fund raising, communication, and promotional activities to support the mission of the seminary.

Indicators of Effectiveness:

1. Prepare for a comprehensive campaign.
 - Cost: \$100,000 - \$200,000.

- Method: 1) build a strong major gifts program including prospect research, data base screening, and major gift staff; 2) craft a case statement; 3) identify significant lead gifts of \$100,000 or more; and 4) secure commitment from BOT and major donors to support campaign.
 - Intention: Dependent on feasibility study to assess campaign capacity.
 - Timeline: 2026 for quiet phase of campaign; public launch when 2/3 of campaign goal have been pledged or received.
 - To Achieve: Implementation of TSC Philanthropy’s campaign readiness recommendations, completion of campaign feasibility study, BOT approval for campaign, and creation of Campaign Steering Committee.
 - Shepherd: President, Executive Director of Development and Alumni Relations.
 - Allies: Board of Trustees, Campaign Steering Committee.
2. Develop vibrant alumni network to increase engagement by fifty percent annually.
- Cost: Potential events and marketing pieces.
 - Method: Define “engagement” and develop appropriate metrics.
 - Intention: Identify opportunities to better serve our alumni and seek alumni assistance with student recruiting.
 - Timeline: Offer three alumni-focused programs by June 2025; develop longer-term timeline based on experience.
 - To Achieve: One or two alumni focus groups to define alumni preferences, develop three alumni-focused programs by June 2025.
 - Shepherd: Executive Director of Development; Oklahoma Campus Coordinator.
 - Allies: Alumni.
3. Establish contextually appropriate resources and strategic goals for the Oklahoma City campus.
- Cost and/or Allocation Method: Strategic Planning Initiatives funding exists in the annual budget.
 - Method: Review original aims for Oklahoma campus and revise aims for current context.
 - Intention: Ensure comparable student experiences between the Kansas and Oklahoma campuses.
 - Timeline: Install a new Executive Director of the Oklahoma Campus by July 1, 2025 and develop revised aims and comparability plans by July 1, 2026.
 - To Achieve: Hire a new Executive Director of the Oklahoma Campus and develop revised aims and comparability plans.
 - Shepherd: Executive Director of the Oklahoma City Campus.
 - Allies: Oklahoma Conference of the UMC; Oklahoma City University.
4. Increase collaborative offerings with Resurrection and Oklahoma City University
- Cost and/or Allocation Method: TBD.
 - Method: 1) Implement joint program offerings with OCU for both the masters and D.Min. degrees; 2) explore additional internship and fellowship opportunities with Resurrection; 3) offer resources for educational support, special audit discount for Resurrection members; 4) promote educational opportunities at OCU and Resurrection especially those which support course offerings and student groups.
 - Intention: Enhance SPST’s academic offerings through joint programs with OCU; Increase options for SPST students to participate in Resurrection programs.
 - Timeline: Complete agreements with OCU and Resurrection by 2026.
 - Shepherd: President; Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean; and the Executive Director of the Oklahoma City Campus.
 - Allies: Resurrection, Oklahoma City University.

5. Devise an institutional plan defining the means and modalities for internal and external communications on behalf of Saint Paul School of Theology.
 - Cost and/or Allocation Method: TBD.
 - Method: Revise the 2021 Communications Guidebook to reflect the current needs for Saint Paul.
 - Intention: A reference guide for all faculty, staff, and trustees to determine both style recommendations and appropriate audiences for internal and external communications.
 - Timeline: Distribution of completed guide by January 1, 2025.
 - To Achieve: Consultation with faculty, staff, and trustees about communications policies and endorsement thereafter of a communications guide by the Executive Leadership Team.
 - Shepherd: Executive Director for Admissions and Communications.
 - Allies: Faculty, Staff, ELT.

Appendix

Goal #1 - Saint Paul, striving to become “the beloved community,” will develop a campus culture of belonging, advocacy, justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion (BAJEDI).

Develop methods to address resistance to an anti-oppression and antiracism institution.

- Cost and/or Allocation Method: Strategic Planning Funds.
- Method: 1) Develop a plan for how we respond to and manage resistance toward an anti-oppression and antiracism institution; 2) Create a clear and concise policy that states what healthy resistance looks like versus unhealthy resistance.
- Intention: 1) Understand our motivating values and ethics, providing space for engaging dialogue around uncomfortable conversations or resistance; 2) Have a clear action plan for how we handle harmful resistance.
- Timeline: End of Year 2024 for the policy described in “Method.” End of academic year 2024/2025 for implementation and ongoing development of capacity – should be measurable. End of Summer 2025 for policy statement. End of academic year 2025/2026 for implementation and ongoing development of capacity – should be measurable.
- To Achieve: 1) Create a policy statement approved by the Board; 2) Have measurable results from implementation that yield definable growth.
- Shepherd: President and CFO/COO.
- Allies: Board of Trustees.

Define BAJEDI for Saint Paul.

- Cost and/or Allocation Method: Minimal cost.
- Method: 1) Gather recommendations from faculty and staff about a BAJEDI definition for SPST; 2) Compare with recommendations from the student body; 3) Based upon recommendations, ELT will create a definition for BAJEDI at SPST; 4) Present working definition back to faculty, staff, and students for feedback; 5) Refine definition; 6) Share with Trust & Collaboration; 7) Present finalized BAJEDI definition to BOT for approval; 8) Once BAJEDI definition is approved, share among the departments, post it in public spaces, include in conversation during New Student Orientation; 9) Review the BAJEDI definition annually.
- Intention: Define a culture of belonging, advocacy, justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion in all aspects of our community, professional, and academic life.
- Timeline: End of the academic year 2024/2025.
- To Achieve: 1) Complete all steps of the process; 2) Approved and implemented; 3) Annually review BAJEDI definition.
- Shepherd: ELT.

- Allies: Faculty, staff, students, Trust and Collaboration Committee.

Each department/level of Saint Paul will develop a BAJEDI plan.

- Cost: Cost and/or Allocation Method: Minimal cost.
- Method: Based on the data collected and work accomplished for IOE #5, ask each department to complete a BAJEDI plan for submission and approval from ELT and/or Trust and Collaboration Committee.
- Intention: 1) Implementation of a BAJEDI plan in each department that fits the SPST definition and is measurable; 2) Evaluate annually.
- Timeline: Based on IOE #5 completion. End of Year 2025.
- To Achieve: 1) Require every department/level to have an approved BAJEDI plan implemented and operational, including educating all in the department regarding their plan; 2) Plans across departments should work together for the greater good and have strong similarities as appropriate.
- Shepherd: ELT – CFO/COO and Executive Director of the Oklahoma Campus.
- Allies: Faculty and Staff.

Goal #3 – Saint Paul will strengthen our enrollment management processes to reflect our commitment to diversity.

Increase scholarship funding for first year students to 100%.

- Cost and/or Allocation Method: Need to calculate based on enrollment goals.
- Method: 1) Establish funding need based on enrollment goals each year; 2) Identify students with gaps in funding; 3) Identify donors from Board, Alumni, and Community; 4) Develop development campaign to identify donor base; 5) Establish guidelines for distribution.
- Intention: Continued commitment to decrease amount of debt incurred during seminary journey for all students.
- Timeline: Fall 2026 all incoming students with gaps in funding will receive remaining scholarship funds from Saint Paul to cover 100% of tuition for the first year.
- To Achieve: Fall 2026 for initial benchmark.
- Shepherds: Executive Director of Development.
- Allies: Executive Director of Admissions and Communications, Chief Financial Officer, Registrar and Director of Financial Aid, and Student Council President.