

SOUTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY: A STATEMENT OF WHO WE ARE

Southwestern possesses a historic and continuing mission that has guided our development from frontier origins in the Republic of Texas to the complex international society we confront today. A defining heritage has emerged from our response to these challenges.

Southwestern originated in pioneering Texas and finds its identity in entering unfamiliar environments with confidence and vigor. We were not founded to defend an established order, but to generate creative responses to altered opportunities and resources. We have surmounted severe hardship, as in the adversities that led to our arrival in Georgetown, and subsequently in the Great Depression. Southwestern has also known times of abundance, and at the beginning of the 20th century it possessed financial strength and academic distinction. In the 21st century, we face an unprecedented opportunity, that of attaining national leadership as a liberal arts and sciences college.

Southwestern stands in a United Methodist tradition of higher education. Non-sectarian and diverse in its collective life, Southwestern's character is shaped by John Wesley's appeal: "Let learning and vital piety be joined." Dogmatic rigidity is alien to our institutional spirit; we hold that ethical commitments and spiritual identities must welcome and support the swift advance of knowledge. Believing that none has a permanent monopoly on truth, Southwestern is fundamentally committed to academic freedom, to the informed debate in which new knowledge, new ethical insights and richer spiritualities are grounded. Southwestern also shares the traditional Methodist concern for social justice: we seek to promote a sense of social responsibility and are committed to offering the benefits of higher education to those who confront adverse financial and social circumstances.

Southwestern is a human-scale community, at whose center is meaningful human relationships rather than bureaucratic routines. Students and faculty, administration and staff, as well as the Board of Trustees—all are answerable to face-to-face relationships that impose a level of responsibility unknown in very large institutions. Our small size and private character do not mean seclusion from the broader world of social and political conflict, but afford a distinctive and humane way of engaging that world.

Participants in this community are citizens; each has a stake in the destiny of the whole, and all play parts in the decisions that shape the common life. An emphasis on the fine arts, and the liberal arts and sciences has taken precedence at Southwestern during the last two decades, and the quest for national standing has moved toward a successful completion. Southwestern's tradition of communal responsibility has provided mutual support and encouragement amid the rigorous individual and collective striving to excel. The tradition of mutual cooperation and nurture sustains the environment of teaching and learning, supporting the ethical development and personal wholeness of students as their intellectual capacities are challenged.

Southwestern occupies a culturally diverse and vital setting. In coming to Williamson County, Southwestern entered a community of farmers and ranchers with distinct economies that faced each other across the Balcones Fault; here Tejanos, Swedes, Czechs, Germans, Anglos and African-Americans retained their cultural identities. The cultural, intellectual and social life of Austin—the state capital—enriches this diversity and multiplies the resources for personal and collective development available to members of the Southwestern community.

Sun Belt prosperity has brought economic vitality and cultural leadership, placing Central Texas on a national stage. Austin has become an international center for the emerging information society and is a focal point for developing relations between the United States and Latin America. Southwestern is now responding to the challenges of a global community in the effort to move from national standing to national leadership as a liberal arts and sciences college.

AIMS, CORE PURPOSE AND CORE VALUES OF THE UNIVERSITY

Officially adopted by the faculty and Board of Trustees in 1972 and amended in 2001:

Southwestern University, under the auspices of the United Methodist Church, is committed to undergraduate liberal education involving both the study of and participation in significant aspects of our cultural heritage, expressed primarily through the arts, the sciences, the institutions and the professions of society. As defined by the members of the Southwestern University community, including faculty, staff, students, alumni and trustees, the core purpose of Southwestern University is that of fostering a liberal arts community whose values and actions encourage contributions toward the well-being of humanity. To this end, the Southwestern University community has agreed upon a set of core values that serve as the guiding principles for the institution:

Promoting lifelong learning and a passion for intellectual and personal growth.

Fostering diverse perspectives.

Being true to oneself and others.

Respecting the worth and dignity of persons.

Encouraging activism in the pursuit of justice and the common good.

As a teaching-learning community, Southwestern encourages rigorous inquiry and scholarship, creative teaching and the expression of free human life. The University seeks to involve the student in finding a personal and social direction for life, developing more sensitive methods of communication, cultivating those qualities and skills which make for personal and professional effectiveness, and learning to think clearly and make relevant judgments and discriminations.

POLICY STATEMENTS

Southwestern University is committed to the principle of equal opportunity for all persons without regard to sex, race, color, religion, age, disability, national or ethnic origin, or any other impermissible factor. Southwestern University's commitment to equal opportunity includes nondiscrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. It is also committed to taking affirmative steps to see that such opportunities are made available for personnel in employment, promotion, transfer, recruitment, rates of pay and other forms of compensation, and selection for training.

Southwestern University is also committed to equal opportunity for all persons to complete a Southwestern degree program. Therefore, no academically qualified applicant will be refused admission on the basis of factors listed above. Recruitment and the administration of student financial aid will be conducted on the same non-discriminatory basis.

Southwestern University, in compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1992, recognizes that qualified students who have made Southwestern University aware of diagnosed disabilities, including specific learning disabilities, are entitled to an equal opportunity to benefit from the educational program of the University and that reasonable academic accommodations may be necessary to provide that opportunity to students with disabilities.