



Dear Fuller Community,

As many of you know, last month brought important decisions by our [Board of Trustees](#) toward which we have been working since May of 2018, when the board made the historic decision to sell Fuller's Pasadena campus. At that time the challenge was to consolidate business and educational models to assure Fuller's sustainability and to orient us toward a new era of theological learning. Divisional leaders\* and the Future of Fuller Working Group\*\* were tasked with considering the missional, financial, educational, and visionary details around such a decision, and to present recommendations to the board.

So much change has occurred in the interim between that 2018 meeting and last week's. Seismic shifts in the culture, in the industry of graduate education, in the church, and at Fuller have sometimes made it hard to even keep up communication around it all. Along the way, we've seen important appointments in our [senior academic leadership](#), key successful accreditation audits, much necessary work around [inclusion and equity](#), the launch of [FULLER Formation](#), a renewed commitment to alumni relationships, the selection of architects for our new campus, and dozens of design interviews conducted.

Notable among the days immediately following the January trustee meetings was an employee town hall wherein our new board chair, Dan Meyer, and long-time trustees Cliff Penner, Meritt Sawyer, Daniel Villanueva, and Jean Burch expressed apology on behalf of the board for their contribution to the insecure financial climate of recent years and for insufficient face-to-face connection between the board and the community. Meyer had a response for those who wondered aloud, "Have we uncovered all there is to uncover?" While we cannot predict every aspect of the future, he said, "we believe we are now fully immersed in the myriad disruptive realities that led us to where we are today and understand the complex and dynamic reality that Fuller is facing. This is a major inflection point in the ministry of Fuller, and while the challenges are formidable, we have deep conviction that there is a creative path forward for us. We commit ourselves afresh to work with President Labberton, the administration, faculty, and staff in undertaking the critical actions needed to realize that future."

One year later, during the May 2019 Board of Trustees meetings, the Future of Fuller Working Group and divisional leaders presented major recommendations that were formally adopted by the board, and other reports representing years of strategic work that began even before the decision around the sale. These recommendations included, but were not limited to, core commitments to guide the process; plans and design for a new campus building in Pomona; strategic and holistic consideration of physical assets and workplace distribution; strategies for stabilized enrollment; the launch of the Fuller Leadership Platform for learners; a successful

anniversary celebrated by [FULLER studio](#); changes to the educational model; recommitment to alumni engagement; traction toward change in inclusion and equity; and a viable plan for a balanced budget. (Additionally, a strategic plan that is in process will be finalized by October 2019.) Without the robust involvement of faculty, staff, administrators, and trustees these recommendations—and the plans for Fuller’s future that they represent—would not have been possible.

Keeping in mind that all of these plans are in process, affected by ongoing disruption, and necessarily intertwined, below are some highlights that may be of interest.

### *Core Commitments*

In order to have guiding principles around the challenge both to be a “new Fuller” in all the necessary ways when we arrive in our new spaces as well as to continue to be “the same Fuller” in equally important ways, the divisional leaders, mission advancement committee, the Future of Fuller Working Group, and a trustee executive committee crafted a document containing the following “core commitments.”

- *Core Ethos: A gospel-centered, multicultural, and global community.* We commit to live out much more fully the new humanity brought into being by Christ’s reconciling work, seeking to embody this in all aspects of our common life—board, administration, faculty, staff, students, and alumni.
- *Core Partnership: The church in mission in the world.* We commit through our faculty, staff, diversity centers, centers of innovation, students, and alumni to collaborate with the many expressions of Christ’s church in forming mature servant leaders.
- *Core Practice: Interpersonal education on multiple platforms.* We commit to the vision that wherever in the world and through whatever method of learning—in cohorts, on campus, hybrid, online, or our own platform—students’ and learners’ experience of Fuller will be interpersonal, community-oriented, and informed by the relational heart of the gospel.
- *Core Offering: Scholarship at scale.* We commit to further strengthen our support for research and scholarship, distributing its fruit in multiple languages, and doing so through academic and popular publications, excellent courses of study for graduate students, resources for learners through our centers and the Fuller Leadership Platform, and as a clear voice in the world through FULLER studio.
- *Core Distinctive: Three schools, one Fuller experience.* We commit to maintain a high level of research in psychology, mission, and theology. All Fuller students and learners will be shaped by these three crucial perspectives, even as each school continues to strengthen its distinct contribution.
- *Core Policy: Operational sustainability and growing resources.* We commit to disciplined use of our resources, through clear and consistent excellence in operations, as well as to expanding the financial resources available to our mission, in order to secure a sustainable future and an environment of thriving work and service.

## *Pasadena Sale/Pomona Campus Build Update*

*Pasadena sale:* Detailed considerations around an assemblage as unique and yet complicated as Fuller's has meant that specifics of sale price, closing dates, and leaseback rates between Fuller and the buyers with whom we have entered into an agreement are complicated and fluid. This can (and has) affected design and capacity plans downstream. This is a natural part of a commercial sale process until a deal is completed, but because we must plan and build concurrently, overlapping processes require rigorous plans with adept fluidity and—often—strict confidentiality. However, as these negotiations proceeded and calculations around building continue to become more secure, we have greater clarity about space needs and budget affordability. This clarity generated the initial consideration of the Houston campus and virtual workspace possibilities, opening new vistas of thought and accommodation—with the potential of strengthening the preservation of some mission-critical spaces and programs. This makes the Houston option an appealing one, which we are pursuing on its own merits.

*New campus design:* The design firm of [Formation Association](#) with [Cannon Design](#), led by architect John K. Chan, began imagining a new space around the moving target of the sale/build (a challenging prospect, especially in the midst of financial and industry disruption). Those designs were temporarily paused while escalating construction costs and complicated parking negotiations played out, affecting the footprint of the campus building. The Design Steering Committee recently reconvened around a second design strategy that was presented to the board in May and to employees shortly thereafter. “The new architectural approach presents a building mass which presents a series of terraces opening outward to views of Pomona and significant historic structures nearby,” notes Chan.

*A note about parking and construction:* Assumptions based on the best available information at the time concerning many elements of the move were done in spring of 2018, but updated realities have affected those assumptions in many areas, such as parking and construction costs. Our original parking strategy relied heavily on 100 percent lease parking from neighbors—an arrangement that shifted recently in its desirability. As a result, we have crafted an amended plan to lease and own that is more to Fuller's benefit. (In the current plan, Fuller will own 200 parking spaces and lease the balance required by our needs.) Similarly, a year after those original assumptions were made, more realistic calculations that affect design aspirations have been made. A design concept based on extensive internal employee and management interviews about space needs, paired with a very volatile construction market in California (which has seen a major escalation in costs), have resulted in the need to reduce the square footage of the original design, prompting a design recast and considerations of alternative space use.

## *Workplace Distribution (Pomona, Houston, Phoenix, Virtual, Lease Options)*

Considerations around the holistic use of our physical assets has led to a discussion of workplace distribution organized in three areas: what we own, what we might lease, and how we might work virtually. The Pasadena campus is in the process of being sold; land in Pomona has been secured to build a new campus with designs underway; our Phoenix MFT program is thriving; and our campus in Houston has been magnanimously gifted to Fuller—as long as it is used for theological

education. Fuller has a history of employees working virtually, with 50 or so successfully engaged already this way. Administrators and staff from Human Resources, IT, and Teaching and Learning are working together to formalize best practices for Fuller around this type of work arrangement. Other space needs, such as student housing leased from a third-party organization (as has been the case for decades in Pasadena), or alternative office leases are in convenient supply near the campus center.

*A note about Houston:* Houston is a thriving market that could support a theological seminary of Fuller's ethos but it requires the kind of undergirding that a decision like this would give. At the same time, our architects are meeting with frontline leaders to understand their space needs while divisional leaders are calculating the number and size of private offices, open workspaces, library, and convocation spaces we need to accomplish all our missional goals. The Houston property gift is a key part of our financial portfolio and offers an innovative solution to office space needs; therefore, we will be considering a move of some offices (in the neighborhood of 50-75 people) to Houston, though the exact number and functions will be decided as we are able to work through realities together. Preliminary recommendations have been presented to the board in a "what if" scenario, to positive support. (It's worth noting, for those who might be affected by such a move, that living in Houston on a Pasadena salary will go much further, as we expect to be the case in Pomona. According to a cursory search on bestplaces.net Pomona is 41.9 percent less expensive than Pasadena and Houston is 107 percent less expensive.)

### *Changes to Fuller's Educational Business Model*

Proposed and recent changes to Fuller's educational business model are both structural and programmatic. Structural changes include the decision to sustain the three school model but consolidate three deans into two: School of Psychology (SOP) and School of Intercultural Studies with the School of Theology (SIS/SOT). This will facilitate greater integration between the two schools (represented by accommodating degree changes) as well as administrative support cost, and also promote efficiency consolidation. [The appointment of Amos Yong to the new combined SIS/SOT dean role](#) has been enthusiastically approved. Programmatic changes include condensing master's degree offerings from five to three, more flexibility in the SOT and SIS master's programs, and changes to Spanish- and Korean-language degrees that include increased online offerings, possible cohort formats, and monitoring enrollment viability.

### *Accreditation Update*

In the past six months, Fuller has sustained a breathtaking whirl of nine accreditation visits (four to Pasadena, two to Houston, two to Phoenix, and one to Irvine) by our three accreditors (the American Psychological Association, the Association of Theological Schools, and WASC Senior College and University Commission). This flurry of accreditation activity reflects a coincidence of timing—the first in Fuller's history—when our periodic, regular re-accreditation processes all converged in the same period. Each of these accreditor teams noted important strengths of our programs, students, faculty, and resources, and each identified areas of potential growth for the seminary. Final decisions from each accreditor will not be known until summer (ATS and WSCUC) or fall (APA), says Provost and Accreditation Liaison Officer Mari Clements, "but we

have found the preliminary feedback to be encouraging, and look forward to the reaffirmation of our separate accreditation, coupled with continued work to build on our existing strengths and to address our growth areas.”

### *Three Channels for Fuller Scholarship*

As the landscape of higher education continues to shift, we have been working to find new ways to offer Fuller’s wealth of research and scholarship to as many people as possible. Our strategy now includes three distinct channels for people all over the globe to benefit from Fuller’s resources: Fuller Seminary provides the same rigorous, traditional theological degree programs to graduate students that we have offered for over seventy years; FULLER studio creates free online resources for anyone interested in a more deeply formed spiritual life; and now, with the launch of the Fuller Leadership Platform, FULLER Formation and, soon, FULLER Equip offer formation experiences and leadership development to learners who are interested in something between the two.

### *Fuller Seminary Students*

Marcus Sun, new vice president of global recruitment, admissions, marketing, and retention (GRAMAR), and his redesigned team are united in their commitment to “deliver the highest level of service and create the strongest sense of belonging for every student and learner who joins Fuller’s rigorous and formative learning community.” The highest standard of graduate scholarship continues to be the engine driving Fuller’s traditional degree programs, and stabilized enrollment by 2023 is a goal set by the departments responsible for new and returning student enrollment. Given our decade-long decline in enrollment, with 1,000 fewer students enrolled than in 2008, early indicators of a path to enrollment stabilization in 2023 are encouraging. After an 8 percent year-over-year decline in enrollment units, in Fall 2018 total units for all programs in all languages declined at an annualized rate of only 3 percent in the following Winter and Spring Quarters of 2019. The Spring Quarter also marked five consecutive quarters of new student enrollment growth, and the first quarter in recent memory when returning student enrollment for master’s-level programs remained flat. We have great hopes that by 2023 our new student and retention strategies will bear fruit, but supporting them during this interim time will be crucial in order to see that stabilization happen.

### *Fuller Leadership Platform Learners*

The Fuller Leadership Platform launched its first subscription-based offering on April 24 with FULLER Formation, intended for learners who are not seeking a traditional seminary degree but desiring personal formation and lifelong learning. The research and resources of the centers, institutes, and initiatives of the Leadership Formation Division, as well as of our three schools’ faculty, are made available through this offering for church, marketplace, education, and nonprofit leaders. The platform launched with 47 learning modules available, and new modules releasing each month, on topics such as calling, healthy relationships, leadership, personal development, popular culture, spiritual practices, women in ministry, youth ministry, and integrating faith and work. This new endeavor extends Fuller Seminary’s instruction for students to fill the demands of a growing community of lifelong



learners. This fall will see the rollout of FULLER Equip, a professional development platform with courses that can lead to a professional certificate. In this way, the Fuller Leadership Platform will become a revenue stream of new donors and organizational partners.

### *FULLER studio Audiences*

Having just celebrated its third year, FULLER studio continues to create resources from Fuller's scholarship and conversations and offer them to anyone interested in a deeply formed spiritual life. Through its curated, free content, the studio also reinforces Fuller's global reputation, recording over 1.2 billion impressions last year and over 200,000 visitors from 203 countries to the site in 2018. FULLER studio and its companion magazine, *FULLER*, are multiple-award-winning endeavors of Fuller that partner with the Leadership Platform and Fuller Seminary to extend the reach of Fuller scholarship, learning, and resources to global audiences. "One of our goals," says Chief Storyteller and Vice President of Communications Lauralee Farrer, "is for FULLER studio to be a hospitable place where people can go for trusted resources on issues with a spiritual component that they want to think more deeply about. Free, original material such as [Bono and Eugene Peterson on the Psalms](#), [Martin Scorsese on his film \*Silence\*](#), [Beth Moore on misogyny in the church](#), [David Brooks on community](#), [Willie Jennings on race and identity](#), [Jacqueline Fuller on philanthropy](#), or [Pete Docter on storytelling](#) are examples of conversations happening at Fuller that the studio can make more broadly available than ever before."

These three channels of scholarly content work together to strengthen Fuller's voice in the world, develop new constituents interested in guided learning without the need for a degree, and foster prospective students interested in the rigors of traditional graduate education.

### *Plans for a Balanced Budget*

The Future of Fuller Working Group recommendations to the board equal \$6.4 million in financial improvements comprising revenue increases, budget reductions, removing items from the multi-year plan, and more. Of the \$6.4 million in financial improvements, \$4.6 million are budget reductions that will happen over three years (FY20–FY22). These reductions are in addition to budget reductions of \$3.5 million over the last three years. Together, Fuller's annual budget will be reduced by \$8.1 million in a six-year span (FY17–22). This has been a long process, requiring the considerable dedication of administrative leaders, faculty representatives, and managers who took advantage, as much as possible, of retirements and other departures to reduce the number of layoffs.

In the most recent budget reductions, managers were asked to make recommendations for 15 percent reductions in their areas and provide insight on the implications of these potential changes. According to Vice President of Strategic Planning and Change Management Theresa Edy-Kiene, these "exemplar managers" approached this difficult task with sobriety and determination, resulting in \$1.1 million in cost reductions. Edy-Kiene, who worked alongside frontline leaders, remarks that they "showed extraordinary leadership in delivering difficult budget reductions in their departments."

The plan is to achieve a balanced budget no later than July 2022 (FY23), which includes the budget reductions noted above, operational cost efficiencies in the relocation to a new campus, a significant increase in the overhead contribution from the Leadership Formation Division, new strategies to stabilize tuition revenue, and increased revenue from the annual fund and capital campaign. These substantive—and sometimes painful—changes, concurs Senior Advisor Bill Clark, represent a “remarkable partnership between faculty representatives, administrators, managers, and staff to find ways to preserve the integrity of Fuller programs while strengthening the resilience of the institution.”

### *Renewed Alumni Relationships*

Among the commitments of Chief of Philanthropy Brent Assink and his team in development and Fuller Foundation are renewed alumni relationships. Last summer, they crafted a survey to which 1,200 alumni responded. Two particularly important data points, says Assink, were “very strong loyalty and positive feelings towards Fuller, and a correspondingly deep desire to feel better connected.” He affirms, “We were intentional in asking the questions, and are equally intentional in our response.” The Alumni Relations team will be bolstered by a new executive director of alumni relations who will soon join “the incomparable and deeply appreciated Bert Jacklitch” and her dedicated support staff—along with the gifted and tireless volunteers of the Alumni Council. Together, this expanded team will develop and coordinate opportunities for those deeper connections that our alumni seek. With the Fuller Leadership Platform, FULLER studio, and countless other resources, we intend to generate opportunities for deeper spiritual formation for our alumni in all walks of life. “The investment in the alumni relations team is only one tangible expression of our desire to serve, to listen deeply, and to provide information about the school that has meant so much to so many around the world,” Assink says.

### *Inclusion and Equity*

Greater inclusion and equity has been emphasized in every level of authority and in every department on campus, even though diversity has been sought after and appreciated by Fuller for decades. This past year Fuller has pushed for change in leadership with the addition of three new trustees, Nicholas Braithwaite, Nicholas Pearce, and Katherine Herrick Drake, to the board; the promotion of ethnic center directors to assistant provosts; the appointment of Ted Cosse and Amos Yong to dean of SOP and dean SOT and SIS, respectively (after the faithful leadership of interim deans Marianne Meye Thompson and Peter Lim); Alexis Abernethy’s appointment to the newly created role of associate provost for faculty inclusion and equity; and the appointment of Mari Clements as the first woman in Fuller’s history to become provost.

In her new role, Dr. Abernethy has collaborated with several other groups to develop and implement a [Strategic Approach Toward Inclusive Excellence](#). This plan has generated the Faculty Development Group for Inclusion and Equity, the building of a database of inclusion-related resources for faculty, grants awarded to faculty inclusion efforts, the revising of job descriptions, the hiring of diverse faculty members, an institution-wide mandate of setting inclusion and equity related goals, a commitment to all-employee implicit bias training, and many other strategies. Abernethy stresses the importance of a comprehensive and strategic plan for

fostering genuine diversity and inclusion, saying, “Fuller has made concerted efforts to address diversity issues, but these efforts have tended to be isolated initiatives rather than a more strategic approach. Isolated initiatives do not address issues such as compositional diversity, campus climate, students’ multiple identities, curriculum transformation, and classroom and cocurricular practices as well as learning. I pray that God would transform us as we reset and embolden us to engage in a strategic process that results in inclusive and equitable change for faculty, students, staff, and senior administration.” (For ongoing updates on inclusion and equity at Fuller, visit [Fuller.edu/Inclusion](http://Fuller.edu/Inclusion).)

Some days, when the sheer speed and force of change is overpowering, I imagine we will look back at this season of disruption in wonder at God’s unseen provision. In those reflective moments, brief as they may be lately, I am reminded of what drew me to Fuller as a student so many years ago and what sustains me as president: The sincere belief that the rigorous, Spirit-led study of the Word of God, alongside the disciplines of theology, psychology, and intercultural studies, is as crucial to the life of the church now as it was 70 years ago when Charles Fuller launched this seminary. As the church herself is in the midst of an historic era of disruption, and many lack a path to a deeply rooted faith, the daily work of Fuller is as necessary as ever.

I’m grateful to be on this journey together. More soon,



Mark Labberton, President

**\*DIVISIONAL LEADERS**

Mark Labberton, *President*; Mari Clements, *Provost*; Dale Kemp, *Interim Chief Financial Officer*; and Tod Bolsinger, *Vice President and Chief of Leadership Formation*; (with) Theresa Edy-Kiene, *Vice President of Strategic Planning and Change Management*; Brent Assink, *Chief of Philanthropy*; and Bill Clark, *Senior Consultant*

**\*\*THE FUTURE OF FULLER WORKING GROUP**

Mark Labberton, *President*

Mari Clements, *Provost and Professor of Clinical Psychology*

Theresa Edy-Kiene, *Vice President of Strategic Planning and Change Management*

Tod Bolsinger, *Vice President of Leadership Formation and Assistant Professor of Practical Theology*

Marcus Sun, *Vice President of Global Recruitment, Admissions, Marketing, and Retention*

Bill Clark, *Senior Consultant*



Ted Cosse, *Dean of the School of Psychology and Associate Professor of Clinical Psychology*

Peter Lim, *Acting Dean of the School of Intercultural Studies and Assistant Professor of Global Leadership Development*

Marianne Meye Thompson, *Dean of the School of Theology and George Eldon Ladd Professor of New Testament*

Warren Brown, *Director of the Lee Edward Travis Research Institute and Professor of Psychology*

Cynthia Eriksson, *Associate Professor of Psychology and PsyD Program Chair*

Tommy Givens, *Associate Professor of New Testament Studies*

Mark Hopkins, *Director of the Master of Arts in Global Leadership and Doctor of Missiology and Assistant Professor of Leadership*

Kirsteen Kim, *Professor of Theology and World Christianity*

Kara Powell, *Executive Director of the Fuller Youth Institute and Associate Professor of Youth and Family Ministry*

Dave Scott, *Director of Institutional Research and Assistant Professor of Intercultural Studies and Children at Risk*

Kenneth Wang, *Associate Professor of Psychology*