

## **FAQ**

### **Proposed Samuel Merritt University-Holy Names University Collaboration**

#### **Why are the two universities pursuing this alliance?**

Both universities are at a critical point in their missions to prepare future leaders.

Holy Names (HNU), like many small liberal arts colleges in the nation, faces an increasingly competitive higher education environment. As part of its sustainability and growth efforts, the University is implementing a major internal reorganization that restructures its academic programs to concentrate on its core strengths of health and behavioral sciences, business, and education, with a foundation in the liberal arts.

SMU's Oakland campus, located primarily in surplus former hospital facilities leased from Sutter Health, is at capacity. The University's classrooms, offices, and labs are housed in six buildings spread across three city blocks. The University seeks to relocate its main campus to a facility that is attractive, accessible, modern, and designed for the school's educational purpose, consistent with its 2014 Campus Master Plan and the University's 2017 Strategic Plan. By 2025, Sutter Health will need to reclaim the space SMU currently occupies to expand its medical campus and meet seismic requirements.

SMU and HNU were both seeking to develop strategic alliances to help address these challenges, and members of the governing boards became aware of the institutions' potential fit. The 60-acre Holy Names site offers great potential for SMU to create a permanent main campus in Oakland, while the alliance would allow Holy Names to advance its strategic vision, grow enrollment, and develop a campus for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The letter of intent represents the first stage in exploring the feasibility of the alliance.

#### **Do the universities have plans to merge?**

No. This is not a merger but an innovative collaboration between two independent, distinct universities. The proposed alliance — in which one university moves to the campus of another university and together they invest in

expansion and development — may be unique in American higher education. The arrangement bears some similarities to a few other models. Recently, Mills College and the University of California, Berkeley, announced plans to broaden students' access to each other's services and facilities in an effort to address capacity, curriculum and enrollment issues faced by the two institutions. In the Boston area, Olin College of Engineering purchased its site from adjacent Babson College and formed a three-way agreement with nearby Wellesley College to leverage the schools' proximity to explore new academic, social and business relationships. Similarly, the seven distinct Claremont Colleges on adjoining campuses in Southern California have long participated in a consortium.

### **What makes HNU and SMU compatible?**

Holy Names and Samuel Merritt universities have collaborated in various ways in the past, including the "2 + 2" program in which undergraduate students completed general education and prerequisite requirements at HNU for two years, then completed their nursing degree at SMU in the final two. The universities also share a foundational value system: both universities believe that through academic rigor, diversity and inclusion, and community engagement, students graduate prepared to contribute to their communities. And, both have strong ties to Oakland, having called the city home for a combined 260 years.

The universities' current needs are compatible but distinct. SMU needs space for an Oakland campus, and HNU has a large, underdeveloped site that may meet that need. HNU is looking to modernize its 60-year-old campus. Jointly developing a new campus would help both universities meet their needs.

### **Will the universities share faculty and academic programs?**

Once it is established whether a shared campus on the site is feasible, the universities will explore areas where they might collaborate while maintaining their distinct institutional identities. A strategic alliance would likely present opportunities in faculty research and program development. As talks progress, faculty from both universities will be invited to participate and to work on ways to strengthen and benefit from the proposed alliance.

### **What changes can students expect from the proposed alliance?**

SMU students can expect to see little change for several years as the universities move through the lengthy discussion and planning period. Once plans are developed and all regulatory approvals received, construction of the shared campus would begin, and would be phased to minimize the impact on HNU student life. When completed, the campus would offer students of both institutions a more vibrant educational experience, with improved residential, academic, and social opportunities.

### **How will the shared campus be funded?**

As the universities work toward a more formal agreement, they will develop a new campus master plan detailing what the proposed campus expansion would include, how it would look, and where new construction would be located on the property. The costs of the master plan study will be shared by the universities. As part of the master plan, a financial feasibility analysis will estimate project costs and provide funding options for consideration by both universities.