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Isabella Purnadi  
*Seattle University*

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# A Day of Reflection and Discussion on Seattle U's Mission

Isabella Purnadi, Volunteer Reporter

Classes before 1:30 p.m., April 7, were canceled so students and faculty could come together to reflect on the educational mission of Seattle University. Mission Day made its in-person return after two years of hiatus due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

This year's theme "Looking Forward In Hope" aimed to reinforce the university's strategic vision to be an "innovative, progressive and Jesuit Catholic university." The event emphasized that these descriptors necessitate action.

President Eduardo Peñalver explained that the theme acknowledges the difficult experiences throughout the past two years while also looking forward to a more just and equitable future.

"One really important takeaway for me was how, particularly during COVID-19, everyone has been operating at 110% of their capacity. If we are going to make progress on our reignited strategic directions, we need to find ways to give people the bandwidth to catch their collective breath and develop the resources to engage in the kind of creative thinking we need in order to move forward as a university," Peñalver wrote to The Spectator. "It can't simply be a matter of doing more. We also have to identify things that we can stop doing because they aren't effective. That discipline will be crucial if we are going to be able to try new things."

Mission Day acts as a forum for community reflection and a space for everyone to gather. This year's panelists included Paige Gardner, Angie Jenkins, Marrakech Maxwell, Stacey Jones, Dan Tamayo, John Topel and Charles Tung.

The panelists represented multiple campus organizations including Student Development, Learning Assistance Programs (LAP), the Student Government of Seattle University (SGSU) and the Graduate Student Council (GSC). Stacey Jones, a senior instructor of economics, commented on the community gathering space.

"We have multiple colleges, schools and staff doing different things on campus. It is one of the rare times, besides graduation, that everyone came together to think about a shared purpose despite the different things that we are doing," Jones said.

The panelists were asked to talk about their hopes for Seattle U and how they can live out their mission as well as the university's renewed vision of a progressive and innovative Jesuit Catholic university. They also shared their personal goals for the university over the coming years.

Charles Tung, the chair of the English Department, criticized universities which seem exclusively interested in abstract notions of excellence while ignoring larger questions about value, accountability and inquiry.



Jordie Simpson

All panel members on the stage in the Pigott Auditorium.

"We are definitely not bracketing questions of value. In fact, we are actually asking tough questions about racial and economic justice and their complex intersection with other coordinates of oppression like gender and sexuality," Tung wrote to The Spectator.

This year's event featured two student panelists: Marrakech Maxwell, the undergraduate student body president of SGSU and Daniel Tamayo, the Graduate Student Council (GSC) president.

Tamayo was interested in the perspective of students coming to Seattle U without knowing about the institution. He believes they would be intrigued by the university's mission and find Seattle U unique in that it is progressive, innovative and Jesuit.

"I thought it was really interesting how integrated the mission and the values of the foundation of the mission statement of Seattle University are with the curriculum," Tamayo said. "Those terms contradict each other, but the panelists were able to put it in such a way that really acknowledged that these factors were able to bring the university to a place where we can promote social justice."

A student-oriented Mission Day event organized by SGSU happened around the same time as the faculty event on the second floor of the Student Center. There were activities such as bracelet making and journaling.

Lemieux Librarian, Mary Linden Sepulveda, noted the panelists' passion for the university mission.

"We have a long way to go and we have 42% new faculty and 58% have been with us. Fr. John Topel, S.J. said that it may take people's lifetime to get there. As long as we continue to be progressive and Catholic in our ideas, we will be able to get there," Sepulveda said.

Peñalver, inspired by the event, noted a similar passion.

"I was inspired and moved by the turnout and by the passion and energy of our community for Seattle University's vision," Peñalver wrote.

The event made the administration's ambitions for the future clear, and impressed the general attitude of renewal which has spread throughout the university since the beginning of the year.