

Charlotte Emigh

10/20/2009

Undergraduate Institution

University of Puget Sound has gone through a number of transitions over its one hundred and twenty year history. It survived three name changes and several location changes. It was founded in 1888 by the Methodist Episcopal Church, as the Puget Sound University. The mission and feeling of the school has been tied into the pacific northwest and the Puget Sound itself since the very beginning. In 1903 the college changed locations and was renamed University of Puget Sound. During the time of President Todd (1913-1942) the university began to stabilize. In 1914 it moved to the current location, in the north end of Tacoma and opened there with 5 buildings, under the name, College of Puget Sound. The college did not move again, but underwent one more name change, in 1960, back to University of Puget Sound.

By the 1970's University of Puget Sound had developed a reputation as a party school, a reputation that lingers in its history, but is not a part of the image today. The 1970's were a time of decision for the university. The university returned to its mission and its roots and built the foundation it would strengthen for the next 40 years, of Puget Sound as a strong, academically rigorous liberal arts school. Current president Ronald Thomas writes in his 2006 report, *Defining the Future*, "Since the trustees made the bold decision in the 1970s—against the trend at the time—that transformed Puget Sound from a comprehensive regional university to a national residential liberal arts college, more in line with the original mission and vision of our founders, we have made a series of

choices, charted a plan, kept the faith, and successfully reached the goal." This sums up the attitude of Puget Sound as a school. These changes are what makes Puget Sound a unique university in the Pacific Northwest, one of only a handful of nationally ranked liberal arts colleges.

In the 1990's President Susan Resneck Pierce continued to build on the changes initiated by the trustees in the 1980's and 1990's. President Pierce made a rather radical decision in 1990, and after much deliberation, sold University of Puget Sound's law school to Seattle University. While this was seen as a rather unorthodox maneuver, Puget Sound set a number of limiting factors on the sale, insuring all staff and faculty associated with the law school would remain employed. There was a five year transition period before the law school actually moved physically to Seattle, where it is now a part of Seattle University's campus. Interestingly, the law school is still on the semester system, as Puget Sound is, while the rest of Seattle University operates on the quarter system. The sale of the law school was a part of a push for the University to become focused on being a competitive liberal arts school. The sale of the law school had a variety of unintentional and intentional effects. The school wanted to truly become a residential liberal arts school, and so closed its satellite campuses in downtown Tacoma, on military bases, and in Seattle. As students moved on campus, the university bought neighborhood houses and instated "theme row," on-campus housing where students can design, propose and live in intentional community around a variety of subjects. These changes all brought the university from 5000 students to its ideal size, just over 2000. In addition to the houses on theme row, the university owns more than 60 houses that are considered part of on campus housing. 70 percent of students live on campus, almost all that don't live

within walking distance. This is part of what makes Puget Sound a residential liberal arts school. Also because of the changes in the 1990's the school was able to join NCAA Division III. The university colors changed from yellow and green, the athletic colors, to the academic colors maroon and white, to reflect the seriousness of the university about academics. However, the school officially remains a university and offers three graduate programs: Masters of Arts in Teaching and Masters in Occupational Therapy and Doctor in Physical Therapy.

However the road to this destination was not easy. There is a current campus wide push for Puget Sound to be nationally recognized for what they are, a solid liberal arts school. One of the universities accomplishments is that in 2007 Puget Sound placed number one in number of peace corps volunteers in the small school division, with 30 peace corps members in the field, against universities that twice their size. Puget Sound also consistently produced a high number of Watson and Fulbright scholars. In addition to prestigious honor, Puget Sound is also proud of its inclusive environment. In April 2009, Puget Sound was honored by the Advocate as one of the 20 Best Campuses for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) students in the nation, according to the Advocate College Guide for LGBT Students. Puget Sound also offers a nationally ranked week long orientation program, Prelude, Passages, and Perspectives. This excellent orientation program leads to a stellar retention rate, 85 percent from freshman to sophomore year.

For its undergraduates, Puget Sound offers a wide number of academic programs and majors. Of note, it supports a conservatory quality school of music, one of the first International Political Economy Programs in the country, an honors program, and a year

long Pac Rim study abroad experience. Puget Sound offers a wide variety of study abroad opportunities and around 40 percent of students study abroad. The student to faculty ratio is 11 to 1 and 90 percent of classes have less than 30 students in them. This results in students having the ability to build relationships with their professors. In addition to rigorous academics, Puget Sound offers a wide variety of student clubs and organizations and even a Greek Community. Puget Sound currently has 4 sororities and 3 fraternities, and approximately 20 percent of students are involved.

Puget Sound was built in a Tudor Gothic style, "Gothic architecture is said to reflect the inner spirit of those who created it: individualism, innovation, and strength." These are the principles Puget Sound was built upon. Three new buildings have been built to support the university in the last 15 years. The first was Lowery Wyatt hall which houses 9 departments within the humanities including English, art history and foreign languages. Then Trimble Hall, a new residence hall that offers state of the art living in suites. And finally opening in fall 2006 the university finished Harned Hall, a new science center.