



Kanana Fou Theological Seminary

P.O. Box 456 | Pago Pago, AS 96799
Office: 684-699-4322 | Mobile: (684) 258-1129
Website: www.kftseminary.org

Talofa,

It is with great pleasure that I write this letter and share with you my excitement about the many opportunities I have at SPATS. Since my Presidentship at Kanana Fou and becoming a member of the Executive Committee, and now the President for the SPATS, I have myriad opportunity to partake in meetings and deliberations on our effort to move the SPATS and her constituencies forward. We have made some significant strides in improving our leadership roles, academic frame of theological education, accreditation guidelines, membership participation, and mission focus. The high mark of this excitement was the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the SPATS in 2019. What a great achievement and is worthy of celebration for the association.

My talk is simple, “**SPATS, you’re amazing!**” As the President of the SPATS, I have the privilege of being associated and surrounded with amazing people—leaders of the church and higher institutions of theological education—and amazing Pasefika cultures. The plethora of brilliant minds and fervent attitudes to get things done is amazing. In my role as the President, I have talked with the alumni, friends of the SPATS, and school administrators about what has changed at the SPATS over the years. The changes in our physical structure which reflects the variety of programs school offer, enrollment growth, and a lot more to be proud of. The Executive Committee and Accreditation Commission continues to be amazing individuals who are committed to our mission, dedicated to their jobs, contributing members of our Pacific churches and *aiga* (household) at large. The truth is, SPATS is now proving that you are resilient and amazing!

Unfortunately, it is so tough to play my role as the President of the SPATS from a distant location. But I am happy of the manner in which our Secretariat Office have tackled some significant matters, especially in challenging times like the Covid-19 pandemic. I understand that many of our colleges are facing difficulties with changing situations in your life, outside of our mission focus and concerns. We are here and exist to support one another; please don’t forget that. In spite of all you’re dealing with, you have stepped up in amazing ways to support our mission. Now its time for all of us to ask: How can we help to assure our colleges that we understand they’re struggling with difficult decisions for this year? Again, you are proving that all of you are amazing.

I take this opportunity to congratulate the SPATS, our colleges, and church leadership for your patience and persistence as we continue to steer forward towards a fruitful and flourishing future. I believe that the leadership of theological colleges, board members, and church administrators who lead theological institutions in our Pasefika milieu and laboring endlessly amid the coronavirus pandemic to sustain the academic and spiritual equilibrium of our colleges have been so amazed. I applaud your effort and job well done.

It is too early to grade leaders on the results of all their ceaseless effort in maintaining our schools and making sure that every students, staff, and faculty are taken care of their need in order to continue and

fulfill their roles as called by the church. It won't be possible to say for sure if anyone pulled off a successful in-person school year until the year is over and student grades are count, report, and tallied. What I can definitively be saying is that our leaders have been amazingly focused on pulling it together to make things happen for our institutions, churches, and our people of the Pasefika.

Our colleges leadership is in an era of unpredictability. We have no idea of when things will go back to normal so we can live life as we used to in the past. I wish I could say that things will be okay and back to normal this year. Unfortunately, we have no idea when things will go back to normal. But we should continue to evaluate the conditions that led higher education to this moment, forces that leaders must contend with today and visions for effective theological education in the future. This, I must say, includes an extensive discussion of the skills leaders at all levels—from staff and faculty members in various positions of power to presidents, board members, and church leaders—can develop to prepare themselves and theological institutions for an unsettled future. That focus can say something about leadership styles, successes and failures. It also comes at a moment of changing conditions that means it's time to rethink theological education's long-term prospects.

But time will tell whether a chaotic fall shakes college leadership's conviction that the path to a better life winds through college campuses. But conditions already dictate that the pandemic has impaired financial pressures, threatening student demographic changes and potential technological capabilities that will reshape the SPATS' higher theological education landscape. But what this will look like is going to be hugely dependent on resources. Even so, our church leaders cannot ignore long-term thinking for the time being. Right now, everything is in "emergency mode."

We must accept the fact that leadership is situational, with each stage of this Covid-19 crisis requiring different skills. We are put in place to make good and dynamic changes in a rather stable environment can no longer count on the same set of skills to carry them through the coming months. So, logistical skills are suddenly more important. College leaders and administrators might need to understand how a delay in receiving course textbooks for students can affect cognitive development.

The challenging question I put forth to our SPATS' leadership is, "What leadership skills do we need to build a preparation for the coming years? Our respond to this question will form the foundation that includes an overview of big trends that were shaping higher theological education's future before the pandemic, as well as the challenges it will have to overcome. It is intended for current leaders at our theological colleges, whether they hold a formal title like President or are informal leaders in faculty or administrative positions.

Regardless, hard decisions will still loom after the virus departs. It is important that we, leaders, learn our limits and learn from our mistakes. What did you know? When did you know it? What did you do about it? And how can you make sure it doesn't happen again?

All of what is going on around our communities taught us that effective leadership is important; it is beneficial and worthwhile. It might seem self-evident, but another theme that emerged is just how important leadership is at this moment in time; our time. Change is difficult, president after president. But never underestimate just how difficult things are going to be. We're asking people to do something different. Something unusual. Good leadership cannot guarantee an institution's success. But good

leadership can help boost its chances, while poor leadership does the reverse. I know that leadership matters. And whatever the situation is, it will be worse if the leadership is fruitless and useless.

Finally, I continue to trust in partnerships. What specific long-term steps our leaders are considering for the coming years seem to vary greatly. Others, however, returned to the idea of increased partnership between our theological institutions, organizations and communities that could provide a financial boost for our school campuses while also better serving students. I always believe that with great challenge comes great opportunity. While Covid-19 has disrupted our normalcy, no disease or world chaos can place a break on the relationships we have built. This will help lead us into a new normal, and we will all learn and adapt together. We got this! Stay positive. You're amazing!

I applaud your patience and dedication throughout this period although we have been separated from each other and have missed many meetings. It is very important for us to work together to help the SPATS *aiga* to flourish and our colleges at this critical time. It is also vital that we respect whatever decision made, upon consultation with our leaders, at this time from our main office while we continue to communicate from afar due to the pandemic. We are all in this "battle" together and our dedicated people. Thank you for your continued commitment to serve the SPATS. Soifua.

Just a servant,

Moreli J.T. Niutoa