About the University

The University of the South consists of the College of Arts and Sciences and the School of Theology. It is governed by 27 dioceses of the Episcopal Church and is governed by the Board of Trustees, most of whom are elected from these dioceses, and by the Board of Regents, which acts as the executive board of the Trustees. Its chief executive officer is the Vice-Chancellor and President. The Chancellor, elected from among the bishops of the owning dioceses, serves as the Chair of the Board of Trustees and, together with the Vice-Chancellor, is a member of the Board of Regents, *ex officio*.

The University is located in the town of Sewanee, Tennessee, on the Cumberland Plateau in southeastern middle Tennessee, approximately 90 miles from Nashville and 50 miles from Chattanooga.

Established with a donation of land from the Sewanee Mining Company at a place known to Native Americans as Sewanee, the University and the community are popularly known as Sewanee.

History of the University

Concerned by the failure of the Episcopal Church to establish a successful institution of higher learning within the southern states, ten Episcopal dioceses agreed in 1856 to cooperate in creating a single university. Responding to their bishops' invitation, clergy and lay delegates from Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North and South Carolina, Tennessee, and Texas met at Lookout Mountain near Chattanooga, Tennessee, on July 4, 1857, to name the first board of trustees.

On October 10, 1860, the ceremonial laying of a University cornerstone was completed, but plans were drastically altered by the Civil War, which erupted a few months later. In 1866, after the war, the bishop of Tennessee and the University's commissioner of buildings and lands returned to the campus to re-establish the institution formally, but the money raised before the war was gone, the South was impoverished, and there was much to do before the University would open.

The first convocation of the University of the South was held on September 18, 1868, with nine students and four faculty present. At the time, the campus consisted of three simple frame buildings. Although years of struggle and adversity lay ahead, the University grew because many people, eager to participate in this challenging enterprise and willing to sacrifice for it, came to Sewanee.

The University's history can be divided into several periods. The "second founding" in 1866 was followed by years of uncertainty during the Reconstruction era. But from the end of that period until 1909, the University experienced steady growth.

Rising expenses forced the University to close the departments of Dentistry, Engineering, Law, Medicine, and Nursing in 1909. However, the University was able to maintain its basic departments — a preparatory school, college, and seminary. Although the academic strength and reputation of the University grew, it lived with constant financial hardships.

The University shored up its ailing finances, undertook much-needed renovations, and emerged from the eras of the Great Depression and World War II well-equipped and prepared to enter its greatest period of growth. From 1950 to 1970, the endowment increased from just over $1 million to more than $20 million. Old buildings underwent major renovations, new buildings were constructed, and the school became coeducational in 1969.

During the seventies and eighties, a new student union and hospital were built and municipal services were modernized. These years were also characterized by a dramatic improvement in the financial condition of the University as well as a revival of religious life on campus. Moreover, the University's three-year national capital campaign met and surpassed its $50 million goal.

From its opening in 1868 until 1981, the University included a preparatory school known successively as the Junior Department, the Sewanee Grammar School, the Sewanee Military Academy, and the Sewanee Academy. In April, 1981, the Board of Trustees voted to merge the preparatory school with St. Andrew's School on the St. Andrew's campus, just outside the gates of the University Domain. This school, called the St. Andrew's-Sewanee School, continues to provide quality education in an Episcopal setting.

From 2000-2010, under the leadership of Vice-Chancellor Joel Cunningham, Sewanee saw extensive growth in the physical campus, expanding enrollment, and successful fundraising. Dr. Cunningham led an administration at Sewanee characterized by fiscal discipline and a strategic planning effort that touched virtually every area of the University's operations. During his tenure, Sewanee enjoyed record applications to the College of Arts and Sciences; a comprehensive program of renovation and new construction for academic, residential, and athletics facilities; growth in the influence and reach of the School of Theology; and increased recognition as a leading liberal arts university. Under his leadership, the University completed the historic Sewanee Call Capital Campaign in 2008, exceeding the $180 million goal by more than $25 million. The campaign was marked by over $40 million in endowment commitments for scholarships; extensive academic, residential, and athletics facility construction; the addition of 3,000 acres to the University's landholdings; and significant support for faculty compensation and academic enrichment.

The Domain

Located on the western face of the Cumberland Plateau approximately 50 miles west of Chattanooga, the campus, residential areas, the village of Sewanee, lakes, forests, and surrounding bluffs comprise a tract of 13,000 acres owned by the University and called the University Domain. Except for the campus and town, the Domain is preserved in a natural state as a wildlife preserve, recreational area, and site for scientific study. The unincorporated town of Sewanee, which is managed by the University administration, has a population of 2,500.