

Fuller seminary to sell Pasadena campus and move

While still one of the largest seminaries in the U.S., Fuller has faced declining enrollment.

by [Christian Century staff](#) in the [July 4, 2018](#) issue



Payton Hall on the campus of Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California. [Some rights reserved](#) by [Bobak Ha'Eri](#).

Fuller Theological Seminary plans to sell its campus in Pasadena, California, and move 27 miles east to Pomona in three years.

The sale of the campus will eliminate all of the school's debt, increase its endowment, and provide "seed funding for state-of-the-art facilities," seminary president Mark Labberton [wrote in a public letter in late May](#).

"In the last few years we have been through meticulous financial excavation, budget scrutiny, and painful cuts as we've navigated an increasingly challenging and disrupted higher education landscape," he wrote. "Belt-tightening alone, though, is not enough."

Accreditation required the 71-year-old school to remain in California, and leaders were committed to being reachable for commuters from Pasadena. Advisors and trustees established additional criteria in exploring possible locations in Southern California.

Fuller leaders noted the diversity and relative affordability of Pomona. The city of about 150,000 is slightly larger than Pasadena, with a more culturally diverse population, according to U.S. Census data. The median household income is \$50,360 in Pomona, in contrast to \$73,029 in Pasadena.

Enrollment has declined at Fuller's regional campuses, Labberton wrote. The school will phase out degree programs in Seattle as well as in Irvine and Menlo Park, California. Fuller will continue to offer classes in Houston, Phoenix, and Colorado Springs.

Fuller is one of the three largest seminaries in the U.S., along with Southeastern and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminaries of the Southern Baptist Convention, [according to Association of Theological Schools data](#).

This academic year, Fuller had 1,319 full-time-equivalent students and a total enrollment of 2,897 students, ATS recorded. That's down several hundred from 1,708 full-time-equivalent students and a total enrollment of 3,579 in fall 2012.

Each year 16 percent more of Fuller's classes are conducted online, Labberton noted in an earlier letter, writing that "we are not offering courses that are merely for information distribution, but rather are working diligently to create small learning communities for true formation. We are grateful that the evaluations of our in-person and our online courses are virtually the same."

Increasingly people who sign up for Fuller's courses are not seeking a degree. Rather, they may already have a theological degree or work in another field.

In a third letter in May, Labberton wrote of how reinvention "allows us to address institutional weaknesses."

"I must also acknowledge critiques of insufficient financial rigor, broken promises, implicit biases, and systemic injustices," he wrote. "We will always live somewhere between the concrete and the aspirational, but this season of tumult gives us a continuing chance to be bold in crafting a future where the theology we study is fully

embodied in our life together.”

A version of this article, which was edited on June 15, appears in the print edition under the title “Fuller Seminary to sell campus and move.”