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From Good to Great: A New Vision for Academic Affairs

John P. Pelissero

Provost, Loyola University Chicago

Faculty Convocation Speech

September 2010

Good afternoon, friends,

I am honored and humbled to stand here today and be able to speak to you, my colleagues, as the provost of Loyola University Chicago. A mere 25 years ago, I moved into my first faculty office on the 9th floor of Damen Hall. I remember well the excitement and hope that I felt at that time—about being a good teacher and mentor to students, about becoming a successful researcher, providing significant contributions to my discipline, and to contributing in meaningful ways to the mission of this institution. Damen Hall is where my excitement and formation as a faculty member began at Loyola. I hope that the demise of Damen—being taken apart piece by piece-- is not a forerunner to what may happen in the next phase of my professional career — deconstruction—piece by piece. (I'm an optimist, so I'm hopeful for a better outcome.)

I want to speak to you today about my vision and the goals for our academic enterprise, which will be instrumental in achieving the objectives of the university's ambitious strategic plan by 2015. This plan, as you know, is an academic plan. It is about delivering a Transformative Education, grounded in Ignatian values and Jesuit principles. What we hope to be as an institution of higher learning in 5 years, is laid out in the goals and strategies of the plan.

Let me start with a reflection on Transformative Education. Is this education different from what we have been providing to tens of thousands of first generation college students for many decades? No. In fact, it is very consistent with Loyola's 100-year old mission. But it is different in a key aspect. It is about intentionality. We, as educators of the next generation of leaders for

our communities and the world, must become more directive, more intentional about the 450-year old Jesuit approach to education, to a set of principles that still should guide the curriculum. It is a pedagogy that must emphasize the ways we want students to learn and develop: beginning with rich experiences in our learning environments, time for reflection, an opportunity to form evidence-based judgments, and a willingness and compassion to engage and act on what one has learned.

We are fortunate to work in a Jesuit institution of higher education with a brand that distinguishes us both from secular and other faith-based institutions. By this I mean that the combination of the Catholic Intellectual Heritage and the Jesuit Tradition provide an environment in which values-based learning can develop graduates who have a commitment to lead, to serve, to live in an extraordinary fashion.

My goals for the coming year are intended to help us realize that transformative experience for our students. Let me tell you about my goals for this year and describe how these fit in to my vision.

First, Delivering a Transformative Undergraduate Education

This entails completing revisions to the University Core Curriculum, and we are well on our way to this end. Our faculty in philosophy and theology worked diligently last year to revise the courses and create a more foundational, and developmental approach to learning in the ethics, philosophical, and theological/religious studies areas of the Core. The University Writing Seminar curriculum was revised. This year the work will be centered among faculty from other departments that support the Core knowledge areas, achieving a more developmental and coherent approach to learning in each area. I expect a modified Core curriculum to be implemented in Fall 2012.

Other improvements are needed to make Loyola the premier undergraduate program in the Chicago area. This will require array of engaged learning courses for students—internships, service learning, research with professors, study abroad and capstone experiences, seminars, and performances. NSSE says we are making progress, but we still trail the other AJCU schools.

And we will pursue exceptional collaboration between Academic Affairs and the Student Development division on a four-year student development plan. What should we expect to be the outcomes of our First Year experience? And what of the Sophomore, Junior and Senior years? How does co-curricular learning and experience contribute to student development? Personnel from my office will continue work with Student Development on this plan.

Finally, we must make significant progress on full-time faculty teaching in Core and undergraduate programs. Undergraduate teaching and learning, with scholar-teachers, is a hunger of our students. Loyola remains an institution that cares deeply about teaching. But I would expand that to say that we care about teaching and student learning. Today, we are much more intentional about stating the learning outcomes for our courses, for measuring student learning, and, finally, revising our curriculum based on the student outcomes. And that will continue.

Second, Refocus Faculty Hiring and Development

Let me be direct. We need more faculty to teach our students, especially our undergraduates. We will address this need with a two-pronged approach.

First, we should recommit ourselves to the teaching mission. Last year, we began to address the challenges of the dual faculty responsibilities to instruction and research. We developed a guide to instructional responsibilities that calls for realistic and fair definitions of what it means to be a research intensive faculty member—something to which we may aspire--and what is a research active faculty member, which is what we expect all tenure stream faculty to be. When

we accomplish and embrace this, we will have addressed the teaching expectations for our faculty and these should result in more tenure stream faculty teaching.

The second prong is hiring more tenure track faculty and bringing in to our teaching mission more full-time non tenure track faculty with renewal multi-year contracts. With additional non-tenure track faculty joining our work—something already in places like the writing program and the science labs, we can meet the expectations of our students for instruction by our regular faculty and permit our research intensive colleagues to continue to advance their research and the institution's reputation. Without both approaches and both types of full-time faculty, we will not be able to accomplish our important goal of delivering at least three-quarters of our Core and introductory major courses with full-time faculty.

In faculty recruitment, I will place new emphasis on hiring for mission, diversifying the faculty, and pursuing interdisciplinary cluster hiring. This fall my office will be presenting workshops for department chairs and faculty search committee members. These workshops are designed to help the search committees with a more intentional approach to hiring for mission and diversity. Ultimately, we should transition our faculty search processes from "Hire for Mission" to "Recruit for Mission", actively pursuing the individuals we want to hire, providing competitive salary, benefits, workload, and research leaves. And we must ensure that the hires are a good fit for our mission—the university's, the academic programs, and our students. If faculty hired are not a good fit for the type of institution that we aspire to be, then they will not stay. And when we lose faculty, we lose our investment in their development and work in our mission.

In addition to the workshops, I will place special emphasis on diversity hiring of women and faculty of color. We can and should enhance search processes so as to target hires that will add to the diversity of our faculty ranks. To this end, I have created a special pool of funds for diversity hires, with goal of adding new lines for faculty of color in each of several years, in addition to our regular hiring.

Retaining diverse faculty is another concern and goal of mine. I will be asking deans and their senior faculty to become engaged in formal mentoring and support programs for such faculty. Hiring and retaining a more diverse faculty is another element of providing a transformative education. If we are to succeed in one of our other goals—that of recruiting a more diverse student population, especially African American and Latino students—we must have larger numbers of faculty who look like the students we seek to enroll.

Finally, on faculty hiring, I have already encouraged each of the deans to look for opportunities cluster hiring. Where are the opportunities to advance interdisciplinarity and to establish special areas of excellence across our academic programs? I will look favorably on requests to cultivate strong clusters of faculty committed to achieve excellence and work beyond the silos of their own academic departments.

Third, Promote New Academic Initiatives

We find ourselves in a capped environment. We have about 16,000 students-- and when one examines the size of our faculty and the capacity of our instructional and research facilities—this is about what we can manage on our campuses today. Given constraints on tuition increases and the commitment we make to financial aid, we will be limited in what we can do with our own resources in the future, unless we pursue new initiatives.

As you may know, the president and I appointed a task force earlier this year to look at opportunities for new initiatives in global education and distance learning. That task force provided a report during the summer that presents a blue print for entrepreneurial initiatives. The opportunities are present to respond to new markets, changing leaning styles of millennial students, and innovative ways of delivering the Loyola brand of education to students in new international settings, in satellite locations in Chicago, and through on-line courses and blended programs. You will hear more about these initiatives in the coming weeks. But I can tell you what is already in motion. We will seek to provide an array of summer session courses on-line

beginning in May 2011. We will be looking to each of the schools to determine if a current or new degree program could be delivered in a distributed fashion—either at a satellite location or in an on-line/blended format. By the January intersession of 2012, we will seek to launch a set of on-line, synchronous learning courses for our students. Again, you will hear more of this in the near term.

But I want to be sure to tell you of another important new initiative. And that is the development of an array of academic programs in the area of environmental sustainability. The elements for such programs already exist—in majors on environmental studies and sciences, in the innovative programs and research in CUERP, and in abundant shared expertise and interests of faculty across disciplines whose scholarship addresses issues of ecological sustainability. We have classroom projects and experiential learning on profound questions of sustainability. We have green rooftops and labs in our urban setting, we have buildings constructed with LEED certification, and now we have a phenomenal lab for urban and rural experiential learning in our Loyola Retreat and Ecology Campus near Woodstock, IL.

We have many of the elements for a profound commitment to sustainability in our academic programs, student development experiences, and our classroom and campus facilities. One of our objectives will be to create a university infrastructure—personnel, resources, academic programs, facilities, and policies that will mark Loyola as a leader in sustainable citizenship. That infrastructure could be an institute devoted to sustainability which draws upon the expertise of faculty and staff from across departments and schools, and begins to model an interdisciplinary approach to education and policies that will envelop sustainable behaviors into the transformative education.

Fourth, Advance Research Capacity

I will be working closely with the research leaders at both the Lakeside and Health Sciences campuses to enhance faculty research support. We recently achieved a significant benchmark.

We crossed over the \$20M mark for external grants at the Lakeside campuses. I congratulate the faculty who pursued new grants and helped achieve this outcome. I will want to see that number grow, and will be supporting new initiatives to promote our research capacity. One initiative that I will advance this year is a program of summer research support for interdisciplinary and cross-campus teams of faculty. It will provide multi-year summer support for meritorious projects particularly in research areas where Loyola can make a significant mark. I envision support for research teams in sequential summers where the time and resources for collaborative research can achieve important goals, and faculty can be unencumbered by varying academic year schedules. And as part of our transformative education, we will look favorably on programs of faculty research that include undergraduates.

Finally, we will place special emphasis on aspects of the strategic plan where progress is needed and achievable in the coming year. These include:

(a) Enrollment management—continuing the progress on shaping the class, particularly to continue the improvements in academic qualifications, enrolling more males, and recruiting a more diverse group of students.

(b) Academic support services –Our key objectives here are to improve our students' retention, persistence, and graduation rates. You will hear more about initiatives in this area, but I want to mention one. We recently were awarded a 5-year, \$1.1M grant from the US Department of Education's TRIO program for Student Support Services. We are rapidly moving to implement a program for at-risk students and those from disadvantaged backgrounds, which will provide a set of academic and support services. Our first group of 150 students will be selected and supported by semester's end.

(c) Promoting Justice and public service – How might we infuse an ethic of life, an ethic of justice in our academic programs, our experiential learning, and our student development programs? How do we ensure that service and justice for *Urbis et Orbis*--the Community and

the World--are part of the fabric of a transformative education? How can we advance Loyola from being a home for all faiths to a campus that actively promotes interfaith collaboration and prepares student to be the next generation of leaders for a pluralistic society? You will be hearing more of our efforts to achieve this goal very soon, also.

So what is the Vision that these goals are intended to support?

In my time as chief academic officer, I want to help move this university from what Jim Collins views as a good institution, to one that is great and proud of its role as a leader in higher education, as a model for community engagement, and as global citizen that leaves the world a better and more sustainable planet. I'd like to see Loyola emerge among the top 50 national universities in the US News rankings; I want to have Loyola be a place where 75% of students report to be at their first choice school; I want us to have an instructional culture where the norm is that full-time faculty teach undergraduates in the Core and introductory courses, where most research active faculty bring that research knowledge into their classrooms, but also engage undergraduates in their research programs; I want 80% of our graduates to have not one, but at least two engaged learning experiences; and I want each of our professional and graduate programs to achieve national recognition –through rankings, service, student learning, and research.

We can be successful if, as faculty and administrators, we commit to work collaboratively, to guarantee that students will receive the best of an undergraduate or graduate education in a place that is true to its rich tradition, emphasizes values, and promotes engagement and sustainability with one's community and the world. If we educate and prepare the next generation of leaders, armed with the knowledge, skills and values that are emblematic of an education steeped in our Jesuit tradition, we will be successful. And this is the character of a university to which I will be proud to send my children and grandchildren, because it is the type of institution that intentionally seeks to transform students in the with the Jesuit tradition.

I ask you to join with me in achieving this vision.

Thank you.

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