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Positioning Loyola for the Future

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Positioning Loyola for the Future

John P. Pelissero, PhD

Provost

Faculty Convocation Address

September 9, 2012

Good afternoon, colleagues,

I want to begin by thanking you for being here on a Sunday afternoon. I know you have many other commitments on these beautiful fall weekends and I value the time that you have devoted to today's gathering at which we welcome new faculty, recognize the achievements of our faculty colleagues, and celebrate the faculty member of the year. We meet today in a Mundelein Center that has undergone many years of renovation and is now nearly complete. Its new performance spaces, theater, and event spaces are beautiful and will be formally dedicated next month. We even have a faculty and staff lounge on the first floor, set to open in days. I hope you will use the new space to have lunch and socialize with your colleagues. (And when the bar is open—after 5 pm—your first drink is on the provost.)

We gather today at a period of time in which our university is doing very well. As you look around the campuses you see the amazing transformation that has taken place in our facilities, with wonderful new and renovated learning spaces such as this building, Cuneo Hall, Corboy Law Center, and the new School of Nursing and Collaborative Learning Center in Maywood. We can see the progress underway on our newest academic and student development facilities—the new Arnold Damen Student Center to open in March, DiNobili and San Francisco residence halls, and the new environmental studies facilities rising up next to BVM Hall.

We have 90 new faculty with us this fall. This brings our FT faculty numbers at the lakeside campuses to about 675 and closing in on a lower student faculty ratio of 14:1.

We enjoy strong enrollments, which support the healthy financial condition of the University. This year we expect to enroll just under 16,000 students. We have nearly 4,500 new students here this fall, including 2,025 freshmen, 650 transfer students. We have 1250 new graduate students—the most racially and ethnically diverse group of graduate students that we have recruited in many years.

Let me tell you a few things about our new undergraduates. They are smart—the average ACT for our freshmen is 27.13 (a new achievement for us). They are racially and ethnically diverse—nearly 40% of new undergraduates are non Caucasian. For the first time, less than half (46%) of the new freshmen were raised Catholic. Nearly 40% of our students are from out of state and about 100 of the new students are International.

Our research enterprise is strong, too. At the Lakeside campuses, FY12 showed increases in the number of awards received, proposals submitted, and funding requested. Although there was a decrease in the overall amount of grants received, there were increases in the amount of awards for research overall and NSF projects specifically. Loyola faculty received 146 grant awards last year, a 12 percent increase from FY11 and higher than the 5-year average. Over half of these awards received were from the Federal government, the highest in the last five years. Loyola faculty submitted a total of 223 grant proposals in FY12, a 23 percent increase. The total value of grant proposals submitted to external agencies was \$73 million, significantly higher than our recent years. Grants are but one way to measure the research activity

of our faculty, if we had more time we could review the hundreds of monographs, articles, and papers published or the dozens of creative works and performances produced by our faculty. In general, the scholarly activities of our faculty are remarkable and significant.

Whereas we can bask in the light of our success and the health of our institution, we are aware of the changing landscape of higher education. Demographic shifts are taking place that result in a smaller pool of high school graduates, national concern about the affordability of a college degree, with media reports questioning the quality and outcomes of our enterprise, many reports of rising student debt and loan defaults (as in today's New York Times), and greater scrutiny of the higher education enterprise from the federal and state governments and by the regional accrediting agencies.

How ready is Loyola for the changes that are underway? Have we created a distinctiveness, a competitive position, a strategy for continued success?

Earlier this year, Fr. Garanzini and I appointed a Task Force on "Positioning Loyola for the Future," chaired by Vice President Susan Malisch and Associate Provost Fr. Justin Daffron, SJ. In the coming weeks, you will hear about the findings and recommendations of the task force. Now, half way through our 2009–2015 strategic plan, university leadership and the Trustees, believe we have the opportunity and the obligation to make some adjustments to and enhancements in the plan. I want to speak briefly today about just three areas for change and preview the opportunities for faculty engagement in our strategic direction.

Premier undergraduate experience

One the primary goals of the strategic plan is to create the premier undergraduate experience in Chicago that is characterized by the pillars of the Core Curriculum, Engaged Learning, and a commitment to the holistic development of students. We are well about the work of achieving this goal due to the commitment of our faculty and the collaboration with the Student Development professionals. And as I will share in a moment, we will enhance what we have accomplished, what is already underway, with a new emphasis on urban environmental sustainability and an education with a global perspective.

The University Core Curriculum revisions include new foundational courses in each of the knowledge areas, and a foundational ethics course delivered by philosophers and theologians. These enhancements to the Core should create a more coherent and developmental approach to learning for our undergraduates. A new requirement for engaged learning is now in place where each graduate will complete a three credit hour experience in which the Core and the Major learning intersect and are applied outside of the classroom. This takes place through capstone experiences, such as internships, field experiences, public performances, directed research, and study abroad.

For each of our undergraduate majors, I ask the faculty to develop new courses that will engage their student outside of the classroom. In regard to your research, I believe our students will benefit if more faculty invite undergraduates into their research projects and labs. We should expand the interaction with students outside of class as advisors and mentors, particularly with first year students who may not be your majors. Becoming involved with the Loyola seminars for second semester students, with Learning Communities, and with our Achieving College Excellence and Cristo Rey Scholars who need faculty mentors are ways for our faculty to offer

additional value to the Loyola education. These students, as well as our students of color, are most successful with a strong faculty presence in their Loyola Experience—inside and outside of the traditional classroom.

Now allow me to speak briefly of two areas of emphasis that will help to make the Loyola educational experience distinctive and enhance the progress on our strategic direction.

Sustainability

The first concerns Sustainability. We will seek to position Loyola as the destination school in our region for Urban Environmental Sustainability, preparing students for careers in which Environmental Science and Studies are an imperative. We have accomplished much in this area already—from the establishment of the new Department of Environmental Science to our experiment station at the Retreat and Ecology Campus, from the creation of an Office of Sustainability to making our buildings and grounds more environmentally friendly, while adding to the beauty of our urban campus environments.

Next academic year we will formally launch a new Institute on Urban Environmental Sustainability, with three key components—academics, sustainability initiatives, and the field station at LUREC. BVM Hall will be remodeled as a center for the teacher-scholars who share an interdisciplinary interest in sustainable teaching, research, and service. A green house, labs, aquaponics facility, sustainable café and a green living and learning community will complete the physical dimensions of this Institute.

But we will seek faculty—those newly recruited and our experienced faculty—who are interested in connections to the Institute, and who will accept joint or affiliate appointments. I ask you to examine opportunities to connect your courses and your

research to sustainability, to engage in experiential and practical learning with a growing population of students interested in a curriculum focused on sustainability. You may do this wherever your present teaching and research are situated. We will look to faculty with a passion for educating future leaders who care for creation, and those who believe that a contribution to sustainable living is a means toward social justice.

And because it is the faculty who produce our curriculum, I challenge you to develop new interdisciplinary initiatives and dual degree programs in support of sustainability. Real opportunities exist to develop academic programs that connect Environmental Science and sustainability to career preparation in Business, Education, Public Health, and Public Policy. Our resources for faculty and strategic faculty hiring will be focused on these areas.

Internationalization.

The final area of strategic emphasis that I want to touch on will enhance the internationalization of the university. We will seek to position Loyola as a leading Midwest institution for International Education. To date, we have accomplished important goals in this area: 32% of our students now study abroad and we have robust set of international options, from our mature international centers in Italy and Asia, to new summer programs that help students develop a global understanding-- even when their programs of study do not permit semester-long study away. We now have a Chicago Center that brings international students to Loyola for a semester of study. And we are committed to expanding access to study abroad for students whose financial means limit their options. This year we will pilot a program of endowment-supported grants to needy students to allow them to go to Rome, Beijing or Vietnam for a semester of study.

But we will need more faculty who are interested in and prepared to lead

international study. This year the Faculty Center and the Office of International Programs will collaborate on a series of workshops for faculty who want to be better prepared to teach and do research in other countries with our students. In hiring we should seek to hire more faculty with global interests and more international scholars. We hope to expand to 800 the number of international students on our campuses and faculty will be helpful as advisors/mentors to international students. And we seek your assistance to extend and develop your linkages to international organizations and businesses, inviting your students to participate, to learn, to engage with your international networks.

In coming weeks, you will learn more about how we seek to position Loyola for the future—improving educational quality, presenting a distinctive value to a Loyola education—while maintaining costs and adapting to the evolving landscape of higher education. For now, I am positive about our future and encouraged by the commitment and dedication of our faculty. Your teaching and interaction with our undergraduates contributes to overall student success, including higher retention and on-time graduations. Retention of freshmen has increased to 87%. In 2012 our 4 year graduation rate set a new high—60%, and we have improved on this key outcome relative to our 20 peer institutions. We were 17th in graduation rates and we are now 10th among our peers. I applaud you for your commitment to overall student success and the ways in which you embraced the call last year to create more active and engaging learning experiences for the students.

Over the year, more than 300 faculty members participated in teaching and learning conferences, workshops and retreats on campus. So many of you have transformed your classrooms, evolved your pedagogy, enlivened instruction with your

passion for inquiry and research, while being ever attentive to the primary outcomes and changing learning styles of our students. Thank you for your continued contributions as the distinguished faculty of this university.

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