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## Distinctiveness of the Loyola Educational Goals

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# **Distinctiveness of the Loyola Educational Goals**

**John P. Pelissero, PhD**

**Provost**

**Faculty Convocation Address**

**September 22, 2013**

**Good afternoon, colleagues.** I want to begin by thanking you for being here on a Sunday afternoon. I believe this is the first time in 7 years that our convocation is not competing for attention with a Chicago Bears game. In fact, if I speak quickly you might even be able to get home in time for the 7:30 kickoff tonight. But in all seriousness, 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 and recognize the achievements of our colleagues. We even have a new faculty and staff lounge to celebrate—Sky Lounge—on the first floor of this building. A year ago, I implied that it would open soon and I regret that it has taken a full year to complete my promise. But it has become one my best spaces for interacting with faculty over a cup of coffee, lunch, or even a beverage during the 4–6 pm community hours. My office is sponsoring a monthly community hour with invitations to faculty in every department and school. I think it will take me all year to complete my other promise of buying the first drink for the faculty, but I'll get there.

I want to do three things this afternoon—(1) briefly summarize the progress made on goals I discussed last September; (2) share with you some of the current initiatives underway; and (3) outline our goals for the next year and beyond.

### Progress on our Goals:

- As you know, we seek 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 emerged from the first year of the revised core curriculum with students completing foundational courses in key knowledge areas, generally taught by full-time faculty. In fact the College of Arts and Sciences achieved a record with over 70% of Core and Introductory major courses being taught by full-time faculty. Every Core science student completes a foundational course rooted in environmental science and every student takes an interdisciplinary foundational course on globalization in societal and cultural knowledge. These enhancements to the Core are creating a more coherent and developmental approach to learning for our undergraduates and fulfilling the twin emphases on sustainability and internationalization in the curriculum.
- Also, we saw successful implementation of the new requirement for engaged learning in which Core and the major intersect for application outside of the classroom. Each academic program has developed capstone experiences, as well as more courses for academic internships, undergraduate research, fine and performing arts performances, and study abroad that are contributing to an engaged form of learning. These new learning opportunities for our students were developed by the faculty and reflect your continuing commitment to the deep engagement that students seek to have with their instructors. I'm proud of your efforts.

- Our positioning as a university leader on sustainability in education and life has progressed significantly with the opening of the new Institute of Environmental Sustainability (IES) in spectacular facilities. With the successful launch we will continue our drive to establish academic programs and host conferences on critical issues that will make Loyola's IES the leading school promoting social justice through sustainable learning and living.
- The internationalization of the curriculum and student learning opportunities has been enhanced with the enrollment of more international students, recruitment of more international scholars, the international conferences on our campus, such as that on Ethics in the Digital Age, and new partnerships like the one with Loyola University Andalucía in Spain. Our expanding presence in International education continues at a brisk pace. Along with the successful launch of the Chicago Center, which is our program of study for international students, we opened our first International House, a living-learning community for about 80 foreign students here for a semester in Chicago. And as you may have heard, the growing popularity of the Rome start program for freshmen, who do their first year of study at the JFRC and then complete their degrees in Chicago, is pulling us to offer a similar program our Vietnam Center in Ho Chi Minh City. And we were successful in attracting a large number of our faculty to participate in the study abroad professional development program that is designed to have more faculty prepared to lead programs of study in international settings.
- Faculty research remains a strong component of our international reputation. In addition to faculty publication of significant books and peer reviewed journal articles, as well as presentations at literally hundreds of research

conferences, for the second year in a row, the number of faculty grant submissions, dollars requested, and awards–granted increased in FY 2013. The resulted in over \$13 million in grants to Lakeside faculty; and with federal grant dollars decreasing nation–wide, our faculty received 48% of funding from private sources, the highest in five years.

Now:

- Although we began 2013 with some concerns about a drop in our enrollment, particularly at the undergraduate level, I am very grateful for the dedicated work of the Undergraduate Admission office that brought us a record 2,520 freshmen and 600 Transfers. Our continuing student numbers have leveled off, reflecting the adjustment to a smaller base of continuing students who are now graduating faster—64% within four years. This year we enrolled just under 16,000 students. And we enrolled the largest number of new graduate students in our history. New programs and new sites – at Cuneo center in Vernon Hills, to International locations, to online degrees – are allowing us to develop more graduate programs, too. The Law School is also adapting to the changing landscape of the legal profession and is developing a plan that will stabilize JD enrollments and grow its online graduate programs, while affirming its commitment to prepare lawyers for careers in public advocacy and service that promotes and expands justice.
- In this room we have most of the 84 new faculty who joined us this fall. This brings our FT faculty numbers at the lakeside campuses to about 700. And

we have achieved a lower student–faculty ratio of 14:1 and have more FT faculty teaching our undergraduates.

- Let me share some news about rankings. In the past few weeks, we moved up in the latest U.S. News rankings to #101 among 281 national universities. That is an 18 point increase in two years. US News rankings get most of the media attention. But in another ranking of national universities by Washington Monthly we are ranked #61 for our contribution the public good in three broad categories: Social Mobility (recruiting and graduating low–income students), Research (producing cutting–edge research and PhDs), and Service (encouraging students to give back to their country). All results of which we can be proud.

We do not manage to the US News Rankings or any other organization’s rankings of universities. Instead, we focus on our core mission—delivering the best in undergraduate and graduate/professional education. And, if in doing so, we appear in a ranking or improve in one, well, we’re grateful for the recognition.

One reason for the improvements is linked to enhancements in the learning environment, such as more faculty and increases in the percentage of classes with fewer than 20 students. Another set of reasons are outcomes, including improvements in graduation and retention rates. We will keep our focus on these quality enhancements in the educational enterprise and allow the rankings to settle where they may.

Goals for the coming year:

- Despite a mid-course correction to our undergraduate recruitment plan, we exceeded the goal of freshmen we wanted to enroll this fall. Now, I have challenged our team to ensure that we achieve academic success with the largest Freshman class in our history. We added academic advising staff, more first-year seminars, expanded on campus work study resources, as well as adding 15 full-time faculty to teach Core and science courses for these students. But as I spoke of last year, one of the most powerful elements of undergraduate student retention and success is engagement with the faculty. I value your time given to our undergraduates not only as teachers, but also as advisors and mentors—it really does make a difference in student persistence toward graduation.
- As we focus on the success of students who are just beginning their Loyola education, we will be giving greater attention to the needs of the seniors who are about to graduate, also. During the last year, we reorganized our university Career Development Center and services, adding additional staff, creating a more integrated relationship to the College and schools, and developed a more intentional approach to career discernment and planning by our students. Now as we work to make that new model successful for our students, we must do a better job of collecting outcomes data to know how our students are doing—as they graduate, six months later, and years after commencement. We must have better assessment data for our own purposes, but also so we may continue to demonstrate to government agencies and employers that we are being effective with helping our students achieve career goals. To aid in this effort, I am creating a new position of Academic Corporate Engagement that will coordinate the Lakeside campuses

connections to businesses and nonprofits, expanding the number of businesses that will provide internships and jobs for our students, and developing deep relationships with many companies for whom Loyola can be a provider of education for their employees, in particular adults seeking bachelor's degree completion and graduate education.

- Positioning ourselves for the future also involves analyzing the opportunities for new programs of study. In each of your departments and schools this is an on-going part of your curricular development. It has led to new online programs—we now have 4 undergraduate degrees for adults and 21 graduate programs. We have witnessed the launch of such new programs as the MA in Healthcare Mission Leadership and the Intercontinental MBA.
- I'm pleased to say that we have made good progress in recent months on another new initiative. Under the leadership of Dean Sam Attoh, faculty from six different fields have been examining the feasibility of a new set of programs in Engineering. I am encouraged by the progress and enthusiasm for such a new initiative. We will be asking our academic shared governance structure to review the proposals from this group, with an eye toward establishing an Institute of Engineering Science by 2015, with new interdisciplinary majors that would evolve over several years. It is too soon to say that this will lead to a school of Engineering, but such programs would enhance our positioning in the sciences, business, and environmental sustainability.



- You began a year in which technology and system changes characterized the new landscape for your work. Sakai is our new Learning Management System, IDEA is our new Teacher Course Evaluation program, and Outlook is our new email and calendaring system. (And yes, I know that many of you are still waiting for your last two years of archives. Trust me, having just received access to my archive of 60,000 emails, it might be better to have lost these forever.) We are working, also, on implementing a faculty performance appraisal system that will be better attuned to how the work of the faculty has evolved in recent years and how the paradigm of the academy now emphasizes teaching and learning, research that impacts society, and contributions to the university mission and the public good. A proposal for a contemporary system of faculty evaluations was given this summer to the Faculty Council and the University Senate for review. I am hopeful that we will achieve consensus on this new system before the next round of evaluations are underway.
- So, we have much in the way of new and ambitious goals for the coming year which also will see us begin to develop the next strategic plan and develop the assurance and quality case for our reaccreditation.

Earlier this year, the Deans began a strategic discussion of the key differentiators of their schools and programs that set us apart from our competitors. They focused on the elements of education, experiential learning, and the outcomes of our graduates which demonstrate that we prepare students for extraordinary lives and that lead to meaningful contributions to one's community and society. To achieve distinctiveness we must hone our programs and continue to recruit a faculty that is committed to this

mission. Renewed emphasis on the distinctiveness of the Loyola education and our commitment to justice will characterize our work in the coming year and I invite all of you to be part of this effort. For now, thank you for what you do every day for our students and for the university.

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