

Welcome for Faculty Convocation

September 20, 2015

John P. Pelissero, PhD

Interim President

I am so pleased to be here today as Interim President and to provide brief welcoming remarks to the faculty at the start of this academic year. This is always a very nice event, now a nine-year tradition of gathering to celebrate the faculty who are the heart of our academic mission. Thank you for taking time out on your Sunday to come to campus and spend this time with your colleagues.

Let me start with some “Firsts” that give us reasons to celebrate today and throughout the year.

- Record enrollment of 16,077, including the most undergraduates in our history (10,719).
- Retention: Freshman to Sophomore is at 86% (best in 3 yrs). But Transfer students have been retained at 80.1% (best in 25 years).
- Graduation rate continues to set new highs: 4 year: 69.1% (The year we began this convocation it was about 52% .) And the official 6 year rate: 74% (8 yrs ago that was less than today’s 4 year rate).
- We have our first associate degree programs in Arrupe College, which started in August with 159 students and we will welcome its new faculty today.
- Engineering Sciences launched with 35 freshmen, the completion of the “E” in STEM at Loyola. Their new faculty also will be welcomed today.
- Another first in the history of US News & World Report rankings of ‘best colleges.’ We are in the top 100 National Universities. Due to the work of so many who focused--not on how to improve the rankings--but on how to add quality enhancements and achieve better student outcomes, such as the improvement in graduation rates, more full-time faculty, and more educational spending per student.

We have just come from a very intense, productive, but stressful year. In the past academic year we achieved HLC Reaccreditation; again due to the efforts of a vast team of faculty and staff who demonstrated our effectiveness to our regional accreditor. We are good to 2025, while being encouraged to continue to work on measuring outcomes and institutional effectiveness, maturing our shared governance system, and enhancing communications. (I don't think an accrediting body is permitted to complete its work without recommending better communications to the institution.)

And we completed work on the new Strategic Plan 2020, *Building a More Just, Humane and Sustainable World*. This is both an inspirational and aspirational strategy to create a culture at Loyola that is oriented toward transformative justice—and to make important contributions to some of the most complex issues in our city and our world.

We have completed, or nearly completed our major construction projects, including the new Schreiber Center for the Quinlan School of Business, which we dedicated on Tuesday in a spectacular event in the building with our keynote speaker, General Colin Powell and the top civic and corporate leaders of Chicago.

And the new Center for Translational Research and Education at the Health Sciences Campus will be completed next month with full occupancy of the research labs and centers by Spring 2016. This building will advance the health sciences research enterprise in demonstrable ways.

Oh, and there was that announcement of a transition in leadership at the university in which, after 14 of the most successful and accomplished years as President, Fr. Michael Garanzini, stepped away from the presidency and took on the new role of Chancellor, helping me and the university with key issues, relationships, and general university advancement. I'm very grateful to Fr. Garanzini for his leadership and his support to me as I've taken on the duties in the president's office.

In the upcoming State of the University addresses, I'll have more to say about our plans for this year and how you can become more involved in our goals and projects. For now, I'll try to answer a question that I'm asked nearly every day.

“So, how is it going? How do you like your new role?”

Well, I usually say something like: “It is going very well,” because I have such great support from the management team of the university, from Interim Provost Sam Attoh and his leadership group, and from the superb leaders of our colleges, schools, and institutes who are with me here on the stage. That support, my own experience in administration, and all of you and your extraordinary talents that I have come to know as a 30-year member of the faculty, provide me with the motivation to lead the university this year in my new role and, I hope, to do so in effective and meaningful ways. My goals for this year were formed at a leadership retreat that I held with the President’s Cabinet and academic leaders from Lake Shore, Water Tower, Health Sciences Campuses, and the Rome Center back in August. And these are:

- to build on the strong academic reputation, confidence and momentum present at LUC
- to sustain reasonable forward progress in all areas, including the strategic plan, and
- to provide frequent and transparent communications to all university stakeholders

In other words, during this year of transition, I’m here to lead, to attend to our mission of preparing young people who will lead extraordinary lives, and to ensure that this great university does not lose momentum. And with the support and inspiration that I draw from you, our faculty--I plan to be successful.

Thank you for being here today and I look forward to our conversations during the reception.