

President's State of the University Address 2015

A Vision of Our Future

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Seattle University is on the cusp of the 124th year of its history. The School of Law is in session; Friday we welcome the faculty and staff to the new year; Monday the 1,000 plus freshmen; Tuesday the 425 new transfer students; by Wednesday we are all here and all into this last year before we celebrate our 125th anniversary as a college and then a university here on this hill. It is an exciting, hope-filled beginning of the year of an ambitious and confident university.

Before these welcomes and the plunge over the cusp into the year itself, I greatly appreciate what has become a tradition of gathering in one place and at one time all of the members of our boards, our closest associates and partners, those who guide and advise, support and connect us, donors and friends, in order that I might provide a wider perspective on our common endeavor in a "State of the University Address." The purpose of this presentation is to assist you in doing your work of service to the university in the particular area where you volunteer or what you support by laying out to you, as insiders, how I, as president, view the larger context and trajectory of the university.

I come to this presentation with the experience of 18 years as president, in the midst of raising money for the university and having great success so far which has such great promise for the next years, and having recently presided at the memorial services of two of my predecessors, Fr. Jack Fitterer and Fr. Bill Sullivan. Their eras of service, the unprecedented dimensions of the fundraising, and the upcoming 125th anniversary invite me to think long-term of the future of the university, well beyond my own time of service.

I also come to this state of the university and this envisioning of the long-term future of the university personally inspired by the witness of the world's best known Jesuit, Pope Francis, who comes to our country next week, and whom I had the privilege to meet and engage in conversation within the past year. Perhaps nothing can match what we want this Catholic Jesuit university to be more than the example of Pope Francis in mercy, in dialogue, in service of others, in a deep and compassionate understanding of the peoples of the world, in care for the earth, in a special love of youth, and in all things a personal faith in Jesus of the gospels, which lights up his pilgrim path as pope for Catholics, and moral leader and friend of all. How does the encouragement of this Jesuit pope inspire this Jesuit university? I hope it helps all of us, however we contribute to advancing the mission of Seattle University, feel grateful for our opportunity to serve, renewed for what we do together, and joyfully hopeful about the future of our students, our alumni, and their impact on the world.

Presenting a vision

Because there is so very much going on at Seattle University at the present time, there is a greater need than ever for a vision of what all that we are currently doing aims to attain, what the destination is, how it can be visualized or described. The Book of Proverbs says, “Where there is no vision, the people perish.” (Prov. 29:18 KJV) In our situation it might be, “Where there is no vision, the people are crushed by the present challenges.” The challenges are great, but so are the opportunities before the university. Just in this year we are assessing every program of the university in order to prioritize and invest in what is most important; we are launching the School for New and Continuing Studies for adult learners seeking to complete their bachelor’s degree; we are doing an in-depth analysis of our university environment of diversity and inclusion and acting on it; taking the next big step into the development of global engagement and of the Youth Initiative; making the decision on how to increase our residence living capacity: remodeling much of the Connolly Center to create excellent venues for both our men’s and our women’s sports programs; implementing a new enterprise resource planning technology system to advance the business and student service operations of the university; exploring the development and marketability of several new academic programs aligned with high demand jobs; adopting measures to assure the exceptional student experience of all of our students; pushing toward championship athletics in all of our programs; and receiving gifts to the university which surpass all gifts in our history.

The Horizon of Our Future

With all of this—and much more—going on at this time, I am increasingly asked to articulate a longer-term vision for the university in order to see how all of this fits in with where we are going and in order to inspire the current work. I have chosen to do this more in a visual than a conceptual way. I want us to see the future we can have. My image for this is that I am trying to sketch our horizon. What can we see on our horizon as we look out to the future? Nothing of what I detail here is “blue-skying”, that is what we might wish or dream our future could be. Blue-skying does not yield a horizon, but is more up in the sky, in the clouds. What I want to describe is a full range of what from our vantage point now we can actually see on the horizon. I say “full range” because, as in regard to all that is across a horizon, you can’t journey or get to all of it at the same time but only parts of it. But all of it can be seen, is on the horizon, is not dreamt, or a mirage, or an “up-in-the-sky wish list”, but can be seen as genuinely possible from where we are now, from the place to which we’ve come so far, and because of how far we’ve come.

Where we now stand

In order to visualize this future, it is important to know where we stand as we look toward that horizon. Perhaps a way of bringing home where we stand is for me to tell of some experiences which come to me as surprises and as causes for gratitude.

- I’ll take a walk some weekend afternoon and see students, and neighbors, and youth groups on the intramural field of Seattle University Park; and others filing into the

gleaming Eisiminger Fitness Center. Or I'll sit among an excited crowd filling the stadium of Championship Field watching a soccer match with the cluster of our residence halls and Seattle skyline towering above as background, and I'll say, "Wow, isn't this incredible!"

- Or I'll walk into Campion Ballroom on four different days bursting with eager new students and hopeful, trusting parents, for their summer orientations and I'll feel overwhelmingly proud that they have chosen us for their college experience and confident that we will fulfill their trust in us.
- Or four new Fostering Scholars will somewhat sheepishly knock on my office door to ask if, on a scavenger hunt to know their university, they can get a selfie with the president. Now that is touching!
- Or I'll meet with the leaders of our community and global engagement and learn from them the plans for the next major phase of these distinctive SU programs... and I'll say to myself, "We have come a really long way!"
- Or I'll review the plans for new student housing at Seattle U., or the phenomenal Center for Science and Innovation, or the use of our real-estate, and I'll feel confirmed in the opportunities we have.
- Or I'll observe the launch of the new School for New and Continuing Studies, of new degrees in graduate programs aligned with the needs of our industries, and I'll be proud of our educational entrepreneurship.
- Or I'll see the year-long programs of the Institute for Catholic Thought and Culture in response to the Pope's encyclical on "Care for our Common Home" and I'll be pleased in how we are advancing Catholic Social Teaching.
- Or I'll meet with the Administrative Cabinet, the Deans, with 60 leaders of Seattle U., and I'll experience competence, creativity, commitment, care... and I'll surmise that no Jesuit university can match our leadership.
- Or nothing thrills me more than to participate in the Faculty Scholarship Day when our professors present their more recent research. I love the Student Scholarship Day when our budding student researchers show their capacity for intellectual exploration. Teaching scholars and scholarly students!!
- Or I'll worship in the Chapel of St. Ignatius with alumni, with students, with President's Club members, with friends from our Legacy Society, with many of you, or I'll pray in the quiet of my room in the Jesuit residence very early each morning, and as I hold up before God all the people of our wide community I'll know blessing, gratitude, hope and love.

I think I work so hard day after day, facing challenge after challenge, that I am caught off guard, surprised, delighted, reassured, buoyant when I allow myself to stop and to realize, to let in, the

goodness and the greatness of what we are doing, where we are and, most importantly, who we are. It's from this place that I look toward the horizon of our future, to what can now be our future because of how far we have come.

It's not just me. There is a reason why among the ranking of 136 universities of our kind in the 15 Western states, four of the top six are Jesuit universities, and we are one of those four. There is also a reason why among the 225 Catholic universities of the whole country, 11 of the top 20 Catholic universities are Jesuit universities and we are one of those 11. There is a reason why we have again been confirmed in our bond rating as a university by Standard and Poors as "A Stable". There is a reason why our Youth Initiative wins national honors and visits from 25 other universities to see what we are doing in community engagement and how we are doing it. There is a reason why our Legal Writing program in Law, our Executive Leadership, Accounting and MBA programs in Albers together with our Engineering programs, are consistently ranked among the very best. There is a reason why we are seen as a leader in nursing, in education, in criminal justice, unique in theology and ministry, liberal studies and in the ever-creative Matteo Ricci Program. There is a very good reason why all who visit, evaluate, or consult for us exclaim that they know no more mission-oriented university. And there is a very good reason why people are responding so generously to our fundraising, already in these last years giving us three gifts larger than Seattle U. has received in its entire history. By any and all standards of measurement the place where we stand as a university as we look to what can be accomplished in our future is objectively evaluated as sound, healthy, robust, educationally effective, promising, and creative. Momentum and trajectory, location and reputation, history and leadership, dedication and partnerships are on our side.

These are the accomplishments of all of us and of none more than you in your service, dedication, and generosity. Feel the blessing of Seattle University and know the gratitude of us all.

The eras of the university

As I look to what can actually be on the horizon at Seattle University's future if we continue to develop the way we have till now, I think in terms of eras. Perhaps my thinking in terms of eras is owing to having recently recognized the accomplishments of former presidents Jack Fitterer and Bill Sullivan in their eras, as well as waking up and realizing I'm into my 19th year and am already seven years older in age than any previous president while in office. Based on the Lemieux era, the Sullivan era, and the Sundborg era, how can we visualize the horizon of the future of the university at the end of the next era, the end of the era of service of the next president?

If you think of the history of Seattle College and University in terms of the life of a person, I would see the Lemieux era as our adolescence (all else before being our infancy), the Sullivan era as our college years, and this current era as our 22-32 year-old period, what they are now calling "The Defining Decade" in a person's life, when the values, career, family, friends, and commitments are at last defined. I believe that's what's going on now. Another way of asking about what's on the horizon of our future is to ask what will our maturity and our full generativity look like?

Let me visualize for you what I see as actually possible—and in many cases quite likely—in our future by the end of the next era of the university by speaking of what we can be in terms of place, person, programs, and impact.

Place

I start with place because it is easiest to visualize the campus of the future. Just in the last 18 years our campus has been transformed with a new School of Law, a School of Theology and Ministry, a new Library and Learning Commons, a Student Center, three new student residences, a Center for the Arts, a Leadership Pavilion, an Admissions and Alumni Facility, the Seattle University Park, and a Fitness Center. This is the contemporary campus after building on what was the modern campus of 18 years ago.

The transformation of the next era is almost certainly going to be greater than these more recent developments. It will be anchored by the largest project ever, the Center for Science and Innovation, at our entrance on 12th and integrated with all our science and engineering operations. Almost certainly the Broadway Garage will be replaced by a university and multi-use high-rise complex focusing on health. I see all surface parking lots replaced by academic facilities and the construction of three new student (and some faculty) housing. I believe we will build a convocation center and basketball arena, a conference facility, a museum, and will almost certainly develop additional satellite campuses in the Seattle metropolitan area, the broader PNW region and Alaska.

That development of the place at Seattle University challenges and excites and inspires me. I wish I could lead it. I can envision it but others will plan, and lead, and bring about this future campus on our perfect location in the rapidly transforming city of Seattle. If what we have now is a contemporary campus, what I visualize is the campus of the future for the Seattle of the future. That is a future worth building.

People

Now that we have visualized what the place or campus of our future can realistically be, let us turn to what is most important about our future—i.e., the persons, the students, the alums we serve and the colleagues who carry the mission.

It is realistic to visualize a university of 10,000 students—2,600 more than now—increasing on both undergrad and grad levels and new adult degree completion students, more of our students served by new technologies at our disposal to expand the reach and effectiveness of the education we can deliver to students. We will welcome more international students, more students of racial and ethnic diversity and, with focused attention and new resources, more first generation students and those from economically-limited backgrounds. We have the location, the history, the mission and the foundation to attract and successfully educate these new students of Seattle U., but it will require us making this a major priority. The largest increase of students will be those who major in STEM, Nursing, and Health Sciences, Business, the social and

behavioral sciences and the arts. To combine this diversity of students while attracting applicants of high academic achievement, while holding the line on the female/male ratio and students who self-identify as Catholic will require all our efforts and generous new resources. The kind of students we will serve and can afford to serve will be the biggest test of our mission.

The colleagues who carry the mission—the faculty and staff—will continue to be of ever higher academic, scholarly and professional quality, will increasingly match the diversity of the students, and will be the principal bearers of our future Jesuit mission, while being animated and served by a smaller cohort of Jesuits more adept and committed to supporting others in mission. Our faculty will increasingly make a greater impact for good on our world through their scholarly and creative accomplishments.

We'll be proud of reaching 120,000 alumni within the next era, actively and influentially engaged with the university, recruiting and supporting students, creating networks to assist with careers, opening doors and building partnerships for the university, and enjoying championship Redhawk sports. You, our governing and advising boards, will be even prouder to serve this university of the future and will have greater influence on its decisions and impact.

At the end of the day it's all about people, the students and alumni we serve, we who serve them, and whom they serve in the community and the world. Everything we visualize about our future must be about these persons. They must stand out on the horizon we envision and toward which we walk. They inspire faithfulness to our mission and our full commitment. The university we are envisioning is for their sake. One graduating student at commencement this June in Key Arena perhaps said it best and in the fewest words by what she had emblazoned on the top of her mortar board: "Enter to learn; leave to serve." That's what we are all about!

Programs

What will be the programs of this thriving Seattle University we are visualizing and how will these programs contribute to the future worth building which we are describing?

Let's start with ten hallmark academic programs standing out because of their excellence and gaining a national and even international reputation. They will be ten signature programs linked to and supported by a new range of centers of excellence such as our current Center for Environmental Justice and Sustainability and our Institute for Catholic Thought and Culture. We will not only be good in all we do academically but excellent in a set of selective, distinctive programs. With new facilities and new partnerships with the companies and foundations of our region circling our perfect location, we will expand and excel in sciences, engineering, computer, and health sciences, business, social and behavioral sciences, and the arts. Keeping true to the foundation of our Jesuit education on the Liberal Arts and a strong Core Curriculum, we will enjoy much greater interdisciplinarity as demanded by our interconnected world and we will have found our way to a semester—rather than a quarter—system for deeper learning and more formative student engagement.

We will speak of the Seattle University Student Experience as exceptional, shaped by service, by the city, by inclusivity, by internships, by strong social ties, by fun, faith, and sports. We will

not compare our student experience with other universities, but will take advantage and make the most of what is uniquely and exceptionally ours. The nationally-known Youth Initiative will have grown into a comprehensive community engagement partnership involving all students, colleges, and schools in academically linked areas of service, learning, and research. We will welcome scores of students from the Initiative zone as our own college students. Global engagement—the full partner with local community engagement—will extend in coordinated initiatives from Nicaragua, to India, to Africa, to China, to the Middle East, greatly expanding the opportunity of students and faculty of our university and of those areas for fuller exchange, learning, scholarship, and transformative impact. In everything we do, in all current, developed, or new programs, academic or out of the classroom, we will provide our students throughout their experience with us a coordinated and targeted career advising, network building, internship program so that we can claim with credibility that a great career begins during and is assured after our great education. Gone will be the days in which we speak of students “going out into the real world” upon graduation; they will be in the real world throughout their Seattle U. education.

We are currently, in this present academic year, reviewing all programs of the university in order to focus, highlight, and more intentionally invest in what is most needed, most in line with our mission and most formative of our future in accordance with societal needs and student desires. As an independent university, a Jesuit one with committed faculty and staff, and with greater partnership with the community, we are able to be nimble, adaptable, and wise in the programmatic development which will make our university stand out on that horizon of the future.

Impact

Four hundred and sixty-nine years ago Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Jesuits, took a critical and determinative turn by choosing higher education as the primary work of the Jesuits because he saw it as the greatest instrument for impacting society for the good. Today as a Jesuit university we agree with and continue that decision and see our true purpose to be our impact on society through our students, our alumni, and as a university. Place, persons, and programs are above all for the sake of impact. How can we visualize the impact of Seattle University in the future I am describing?

The first measure of our impact will be the lives, careers, commitments, values, and service of our 120,000 alumni. Our alumni are the first measure of the attainment of our mission. Half of our alumni have graduated in my time as president. We are amassing a powerful force of professionals with values, committed citizens with competence, dedicated men and women determined to make a difference. Our alumni will increasingly show their impact more widely but especially in our region and will disproportionately influence our society because of the education they have received and the kind of persons they become. Ignatius bet on this and so do we.

Increasingly, we are glad to tie our future to the promise and the impact of Seattle and its region. We are named for the city and we seek to match its vibrant future, to contribute to it, to use it as our learning lab, and to make it our own. We are proud to be the independent Jesuit university at

the heart of Seattle and we aim to have Seattle and its region take pride in the kind of university we are for it and the kind of impact we have with it. As I have said, “Seattle University is Seattle’s university!”

This impact will be shown in our graduates (as well as our interns) working in the businesses, organizations, agencies, foundations, medical centers, etc., of the city and region; employees needed by them and aided by them while in their studies and in preparation for their work. We will always aim to educate, graduate, and place employees with competence and values. Our future impact will depend not only on providing employees and servant leaders for the institutions of our area, but will critically depend on the active partnerships of the leaders of those institutions with us as a university and with our programs and students for the sake of their future colleagues and leaders. We seek full and mutual partnerships. In no region of the country more than ours are these partnerships more promising. We seek a national and international impact beyond Seattle and its region through our alumni and through the global initiatives of Seattle U. Our sights are not limited even as we appreciate our extraordinary regional opportunities.

At the same time that we can visualize our future impact in our alumni and in those partnerships, we also seek as a university with its place, persons, and programs to be a thought-leader at the table around the biggest issues of our times and a unique, open forum and scholarly resource for our citizens, our communities, our churches, and our elected leaders. We believe we can be this thought-leader and this forum in unique ways which serve our community. We see this as a service of what we have and treasure and that it will have an irreplaceable impact on the quality of the regional community.

Beyond these ways of impact, I visualize a Seattle University as a Catholic university more central to and accepted as an essential ministry of the Catholic Church of our region and offering so much of importance that is not otherwise available to parishes and people. We are proudly Catholic, committed to engage faithfully in that exciting and challenging arena where church meets culture, to do so within our Jesuit tradition, encouraged by how Pope Francis witnesses to the Jesuit engagement of faith and society, and to do so while providing a center for ecumenical and interreligious dialogue and common action. This is our past; and this will be our future.

Conclusion

I hope in this President’s State of the University for 2015 that I have taken you, our closest colleagues, inside Seattle University and given you my own perspective will be of help to you in your service within our common purpose. It is clear that we have much to do immediately, so much that it may seem overwhelming. If we look, however, objectively and clearly at what we have accomplished and at how strong we are as a university, we have every reason to be assured. I hope that my optic of looking at Seattle University through its presidential eras gives us a wider angle on the present and on the

possibilities of the future. I believe that my image of a horizon toward which we are moving and which invites us forward allows us to see across that horizon all that can actually be our future. I have visualized what I see as truly attainable—rather than merely desirable—on that horizon in terms of our place, our persons, our programs, and our impact. This long-term strategic positioning of Seattle University describes us as a thriving university of a thriving Seattle and as one of the world's most vibrant Jesuit universities as we aim to be. The vision inspires me. I hope it also inspires you.