2016 Fall Convocation

Kevin P. Quinn, S.J., President

August 26, 2016

Good afternoon and let me add my welcome to all of you.

Whether you are a rookie or a veteran, this time of year is very special for all of us. As we begin another school year at this important place, I’d like to share with you some thoughts on the coming school year.

First, congratulations to Len Champney on receiving the Jack Earl Award. Len you are a fitting addition to the distinguished list of Earl Award winners and a shining example of teaching as a vocation. Thank you for all you do for our students and our University.

Congratulations as well to last year’s winner, Susan Trussler, for her distinguished career in teaching, and well-earned success with the Fulbright program. Our students had another banner year this year with the Fulbright Program thanks to Susan and her colleagues. . . . Thank you, Susan.

Next, to all the new faculty and staff members, thank you for joining us. You have made a wise decision to join this University. I look forward to working with you in your new roles.

As we begin a new school year by welcoming the Class of 2020, I’m reminded of what Peter Hans Kolvenbach, former superior general of the Jesuit order, famously expressed in October 2000: “The real measure of our Jesuit universities lies in who our students become.” At The University of Scranton, we must not lose this focus. Powerfully and succinctly put, “[a]s a Jesuit and Catholic university, our primary mission is the education and formation of students in such a way and in order that they become men and women of faith and service to their communities.” This is how our graduates will do whatever they choose to do; this is the value-added of a Scranton education.

Our work began this week, when our students returned to campus. It was a great and busy summer in Scranton, one that included the demolition of the venerable Loyola Hall and the continuation of our project to replace z-bricks and improve the Commons. Despite all this activity, I was invigorated, as I’m sure you were, by how vibrant the campus is when it is full of student activity. As we all know, the University is a special place to be, especially when classes are in session.

I am proud to say that we welcomed the Class of 2020, 1,012 students strong from over 10, 100 applications, and it is no surprise that this is one of the most academically talented groups we’ve had join our community. These promising young men and women joined our beloved
campus community representing 12 states, seven countries, the Federated States of Micronesia and Palau. This group is set to benefit from your hard work and determination just as generations of Scranton student have before.

Of course, this school year will be different. Earlier this week, I informed the University community that this would be my last year as President. As I wrote in my campus-wide communication, “I have great hope and enthusiasm for our final year together. I will continue to serve energetically as your President during this transitional year. Among my priorities will be to provide ongoing direction in the furtherance of The Scranton Plan and the University’s Comprehensive Resource Review. Count on my full endorsement and leadership support for assessment on campus and preparation for the upcoming Middle States Review. Finally, I am working to secure sufficient philanthropic and other support to seek Board approval to begin construction on the Southside Athletics Campus in spring 2017.” Each of these key areas is substantial, and you can expect them the focus of my ongoing conversations with faculty, staff and students throughout the year. More on this in the coming weeks.

Lawrence Lynch, chair of the University’s Board of Trustees, announced in a letter to the campus community earlier this week that the Board will soon be sharing information about the process to search for a new president. He pledged in his note to make the “search process as inclusive as possible, within the necessary limits of confidentiality.” This is an important time for us all. As Mr. Lynch acknowledged: “The University of Scranton finds itself in the midst of unsettling times for all of higher education. We have, however, experienced such challenging times throughout our history. We persevere and thrive by working together to advance our mission, and the years ahead will demand no less from us all.” I could not agree more.

Especially in this time of transition, I encourage us to adopt the motto that inspired the life and work of St. Junipero Serra, Apostle of California: “¡Siempre adelante!” (“Always forward!”).

God bless you and God bless The University of Scranton!