

2011 Inauguration Address

Kevin P. Quinn, S.J., President

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Byron Recreation Complex

The University of Scranton

“Inaugural speeches are a peculiar genre. They are by definition pronouncements by individuals who don’t yet know what they are talking about. Or, we might more charitably dub them expressions of hope unchastened by the rod of experience.”¹ So says Drew Faust, President of Harvard. These are sobering words, not to be taken lightly. Might I respond to her words by first waving to you in some vaguely presidential way to acknowledge your warm applause, and then promptly sitting down? But that’s not what this ritual presumes—as the gifted organizers of these ceremonies have often reminded me—nor would that move likely sit well with our University’s Board of Trustees. Yet let’s be clear about one point: today we celebrate The University of Scranton with this festal gathering, marking a dramatic intersection of the past with the future, of our traditions and accomplishments with our hopes and aspirations. That is why we are here.

So I stand before you this day honored by the trust of the university community, grateful to the Board of Trustees for its confidence, and inspired by my mission as The University of Scranton’s 25th President. Your presence humbles me and I am touched by the greetings from faculty, staff, students, alumni, our sister Jesuit institutions and the community of higher education in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. I note the very welcome presence of our bishop, the Most Rev. Joseph Bambera, of the Provincial of the Maryland Province of the Society of Jesus, the Very Rev. James Shea, S.J., of “Rabbi Joe” Mendelsohn, and of representatives from other faith communities. I am also grateful to our honorable Mayor and State Senator who have come to welcome their new neighbor. I thank God for the presence here of my family, especially my mom, Pat. She has insisted for the last six months, as only a mother could, that my new job required a new black suit and possibly more than one! Guess what I was scrambling to do last week? Absent in body, though present in spirit, is my dad also Pat who died three years ago. I am sure that he is celebrating in paradise with his brothers John and Tom as proud Irishmen would do. Finally, permit me a “shout-out” to numerous members of the Daly, Quinn, and O’Grady tribes, family friends from Long Island, personal friends and colleagues from every stage of my life and my Jesuit brothers, some of whom have traveled great distances. They would never forgive me . . .

As I was preparing this speech, a number of inaugural veterans proffered much free advice: “be profound, humorous, and insightful; literate, inclusive, and inspirational; respectful, aspirational, and [above all] brief.”² To all, thanks for your encouraging words! What I will do is offer my vision for The University of Scranton, a vision by definition that is provisional and open to revision. I take as my

starting point the question: What does it mean to say that Scranton is a 21st century Jesuit university in North America?

Allow me to name one presupposition before I begin. These are challenging times in higher education. Issues such as cost, quality, access, and accountability provide easy targets for both academic heavyweights and media talking heads. The academy may be adrift, as some notable commentators lament. But these are also times of extraordinary opportunity to reimagine the mission of the university or, in the words of Adolfo Nicolás, S.J., Superior General of the Society of Jesus, to “re-found ‘the universities of the Society.’”³

For Nicolás’ predecessor, Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.J.,

[Jesuit higher education] rests on two fundamental principles. The first is that all inquiry can serve to deepen faith and that faith by its nature demands understanding. Faith and understanding are intrinsically connected. Religion and secular intellectual culture need to be open to one another’s insights. Religion and culture raise important questions and need each other to answer them fully.

The second principle is that love of God which does not include love of neighbor is a pious fraud. Thus we must ask ourselves whether our students deepen their sense of wonder and curiosity, cultivate their ideals, widen their understanding of human life and their sympathy for others. Does the education we offer enable them to learn how best to ordain their lives to what is best for themselves and good for other men and women? In a Jesuit institution of higher education the knowledge gained through inquiry brings with it the responsibility of acting justly for the common good. But the ethical ideal proposed by our schools should be of a higher level than that of liberal education. We and our students should continually be asking ourselves if the choices we make are leading us to the ideal of service as proposed by the Gospel: “Whoever would be great among you must be your servant” (Mark 11, 42).⁴

The University of Scranton is animated by the vision of St. Ignatius of Loyola and his first companions. The Society of Jesus is over 460 years old and continues to educate young men and women in the spirit of Ignatius. One of the key phrases capturing the charism of Ignatian spirituality is “to love and serve in all things.” In Ignatius’ Spanish it reads “*en todo amar y servir.*”

How did Ignatius understand service and how might we follow his lead? I turn to Jesuit David Fleming for his “Ignatian ways of serving.” He writes:

First, by looking at God who is the first to serve, we begin to learn about service. Second, from God, we learn that love is the foundation and love is the stimulus for service. Love is expressed in deeds—in acts of service—more than in words. And yet our service should speak out and communicate the love that is at its source. Third, service cannot be restricted to certain actions or deeds, to certain results or accomplishments. From Jesus and the gospels, we learn that to follow is to serve, to be available is to serve, to believe and to trust is to serve, to accompany is to serve, to forgive and to be compassionate is to serve, and to celebrate the Eucharist is to

serve. We also learn to serve is always to share what we have been given. That is why serving always follows upon loving—because lovers share their gifts.⁵

Here lies the key to Jesuit higher education in the 21st century. What universities claim to be teaching their students—specifically, to think critically, reason analytically, solve problems, and communicate clearly—is necessary, but not sufficient, for Jesuit universities. For a Jesuit university should ask more of its students by challenging them to make Ignatius' charge—his notion of service—their own. This is the “value added” of Jesuit higher education, and is why we kicked off the inauguration last Friday with a “Celebration of Service”—over 750 students, staff, and faculty volunteering in 20 social service agencies around town. This shows that we are already serious about service at Scranton, and as economists remind us: Value-added features give competitive edges to institutions with otherwise more expensive products.

But one might ask how a Jesuit university is to achieve this ultimate learning outcome. What I would like to do here is to propose one way of proceeding by outlining an education—a distinctively Jesuit education—that is *engaged, integrated, and global*.

Jesuit education has engaged mind, heart, and hands since the 16th century when St. Ignatius founded the Society of Jesus. In 2000 Fr. Kolvenbach, then Superior General of the Jesuit order, called for a new Jesuit educational standard. “Tomorrow’s ‘whole person,’” he said, “cannot be whole without an educated awareness of society and culture with which to contribute socially, generously, in the real world.” For that reason, he explained: students “must let the gritty reality of this world into their lives, so they can learn to feel it, think about it critically, respond to its suffering, and engage in it constructively.” They should learn, he said, to “perceive, think, judge, choose, and act for the rights of others, especially the disadvantaged and the oppressed.”⁶

This is the contemporary standard for engaged learning in a Jesuit university. To apply these Jesuit “marching orders” students should be encouraged to enter worlds beyond Scranton, to gain an education that no classroom alone can offer, to learn with and from people in marginalized communities, and so to become global citizens for a new century.

This educational strategy calls for personal transformation that would lead to transforming society. The ideal of a personal transformation requires a rigorous education to prepare students to become ethical and compassionate leaders who will infuse society with faith and justice, informed by knowledge. For personal transformation to be effective, academic, moral and spiritual experience must be integrated with and enhanced by learning outside the classroom. But it must be experiential learning in which immersion and reflection on experience are intertwined and focused on the needs and concerns that many in our world face.

But there is a catch here, a shift in educational philosophy: It is not just serving others and learning about people, but learning with and from people who are often excluded from participation in economic, social, and political life. And further, it integrates academic inquiry, creative imagination, and reflection on experience that inspires fashioning a more just and humane society. Through these experiences faculty, students, community partners, and indigenous peoples become dynamic partners.

In sum, the 21st century Jesuit university should be committed to a pedagogy of active, collaborative, transformative learning about social justice, as an integral part of a liberal education.

To be sure, The University of Scranton is well-positioned to build bridges between the classroom and civic community, between Northeastern Pennsylvania and the world beyond. For the Scranton community already embraces the reality of global interconnectedness and views the city, the region, and the world as venues for our learning and research. One example will suffice: all academic programs in our Panuska College of Professional Studies require every student to do community-based learning. And our current strategic plan endorses expanding service opportunities for faculty, staff, and students. But much more needs to be done.

To deliver a transformative education in the Jesuit tradition, as I mentioned earlier, requires the integration of academic, moral, and spiritual learning—the union of mind, heart, and soul. “Education of the whole person in the Ignatian style . . . helps students discover their vocation in life, above all their *vocation to love and serve*.”⁷ This project of self-discovery and discernment, including discovering “our deepest vocation” is a great challenge to all on campus: for students it causes great anxiety; for faculty and staff assisting students, self-doubt and caution often dictate. (I speak here from personal experience.) Aside from providing first-class training in Ignatian discernment, a Jesuit university must be a place where the Catholic tradition is studied and understood. The vast richness of the Catholic intellectual tradition is our privileged asset and our competitive edge. Keeping the faith is a no-brainer as we attempt to deliver a transformative education at The University of Scranton.

This will require new and stronger collaboration between academic and student affairs, a tactic that our strategic plan already endorses. We may need to rethink our residential learning programs. Are two optional programs for our first-year students—*Cura Personalis* and Wellness programs—sufficient institutional commitments in helping our students integrate life and learning? Or are additional models and new imaginative experiments still necessary?

In promoting the holistic development of our students, we need to recognize what Fr. Nicolás labels “the globalization of superficiality—superficiality of thought, visions, dreams, relationships, convictions.” For him, new information and communication technologies are negatively shaping the interior lives of everyone, but especially our students. They have taken over every aspect of our daily lives from commerce to leisure and even culture. Just think: emails, instant messaging, chat rooms and social networking websites, such as Facebook and Twitter, Skype, iPhones, cellular phones and similar applications. The challenge for Jesuit higher education here “is to promote in creative new ways the depth of thought and imagination that are distinguishing marks of the Ignatian tradition.”⁸ To accomplish this may require us to reimagine some of our organizational structures.

But one thing is certain: Not to realize our goal of educating the whole person in the Ignatian style would disappoint many.

An inaugural address is not the time or place to unpack the concept of globalization, much less the fashionable expression, “globalizing world.” For we all know that globalization is a widely-used term that can be defined in a number of different ways, and that there is little common ground between its

proponents and opponents. Rather my claim that Jesuit education should be a global education is a simple one. Call our current students the “global generation” and so we need to encourage them to think “locally, regionally, nationally, internationally, and globally” in whatever they study.⁹ Providing greater opportunity for international study, increasing diversity on campus, and expanding multicultural experiences for our community—three strategies already present in our current plan—would help our students think globally.

I end this speech by returning to my original question: What does it mean to say that Scranton is a 21st century Jesuit university in North America? My answer: The University of Scranton—a Jesuit University—can and should excel in providing its students an education that is *engaged, integrated, and global*. Faculty and staff, students and alumni, trustees and parents, friends and neighbors of Scranton: We can do something special here. Of that I am very certain. Our University’s “tag line” is “Pride, Passion, Promise: Experience Our Jesuit Tradition.” The key word is “our.” We take *our* Jesuit mission and identity very seriously here in the city of Scranton. So let us go forth together from this place, as the University’s Strategic Plan demands, “[to] set the world on fire,” and I might add “feeling the pride, experiencing the passion, and realizing the promise.” God bless you all, and God bless The University of Scranton! Thank you.

Endnotes

¹ Drew Gilpin Faust, “Installation address: Unleashing our most ambitious imaginings,” Harvard University, Cambridge MA, October 12, 2007, <http://www.harvard.edu/president/installation-address-unleashing-our-most-ambitious-imaginings>.

² Michael E. Engh, S.J., Inaugural Speech, Santa Clara University, Santa Clara CA, April 24, 2009, <http://www.scu.edu/president/inauguration/transcript/index.cfm>.

³ Adolfo Nicolás, S.J., “Depth, Universality, and Learned Ministry: Challenges to Jesuit Higher Education Today,” in *Shaping the Future: Networking Jesuit Higher Education for a Globalizing World*, Report of the Mexico Conference, April 2010, ed. Frank Brennan, S.J., at 21. http://www.ajcunet.edu/ajcunet/files/cclibraryFiles/Filename/00000000822/Mexico%20City%20Report_07-11.pdf.

⁴ Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.J., “The Intellectual Dimension of Jesuit Ministries,” Discourse at the “*Ignatianum*” University School of Philosophy and Education, Krakow, Poland, May, 20, 2002, <http://users.online.be/sj.eur.news/doc/intell.htm>.

⁵ David L. Fleming, S.J., “‘Here I Am’ Ignatian Ways of Serving,” XXXVIII *Review of Ignatian Spirituality*, 2007, at 106-7, <http://www.sjweb.info/documents/cis/pdfenglish/200711607en.pdf>.

⁶ Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.J., “The Service of Faith and the Promotion of Justice in American Higher Education,” Santa Clara Lecture, Santa Clara University, Santa Clara CA, October 6, 2000, http://www.scu.edu/ignatiancenter/events/lectures/archives/upload/f00_kolvenbach.pdf.

⁷ Dean Brackley, S.J., “Justice and Jesuit Higher Education,” Keynote Address, Commitment to Justice (in Jesuit Higher Education) Conference, John Carroll University, Cleveland OH, October 14, 2005, at 6, <http://www.loyola.edu/Justice/commitment/commitment2005/keynotes.html>.

⁸ Nicolás, *op. cit.*, at 9-10.

⁹ Leigh Ann Litwiller Berte, “Framing a Global Education,” 40 *Conversations on Jesuit Higher Education*, Fall 2011, at 50, <http://epublications.marquette.edu/conversations/>.