

2015 State of the University

Kevin P. Quinn, S.J., President

February 19, 2015

Good afternoon. It is good that we gather in convocation as a university community. Allow me first to congratulate our Sursum Corda recipients and to welcome the newest members of our community. To you I say that I remain very excited to be here at Scranton, and I trust that you share with me that enthusiasm. To our award recipients, simply a most sincere thank you for a job well-done, especially in contributing to the Jesuit mission of our University. Also I would be remiss in not adding a shout-out to our folks in facilities: job well done with the snow, wind and extreme cold. Thank you.

Today, in our brief time together, I would like to take a moment to situate our work in the broader context of higher education in America and then to ask how we must work to maintain and enhance what is unique about a Scranton education.

As we confront an uncertain future in higher education (the financial model is broken, the demographics are challenging, the regulatory environment is stifling, and the pace of technological change challenges our traditional notions of learning), effective planning has become more important than ever. Strategic planning is alive and well at The University of Scranton. The University's integrated planning model places the educational and academic mission at its core. In addition to this institutional strategy, four strategic support plans ensure integrated, iterative planning for other strategic areas of the institution, in support of our core academic mission and goals. The nature of these plans reflect the three traditional higher education planning pillars (academics, enrollment and finances), while addressing other specific planning areas (facilities, infrastructure & technology). Our friends at Middle States would be happy.

The University's strategic plan is organized around three themes central to our core academic mission and vision: delivering a transformational education that is engaged, integrated and global. Each theme and its respective goals will be operationalized through a scorecard model, describing resources, centers for responsibility, timelines and priorities, targets, and evaluation/assessment measures. The four strategic support plans (academic,

finance, enrollment and facilities) will be informed by the strategic plan themes and goals, as will other divisional and college tactical plans and operational plans at the department and program level. Serving as a foundation for Strategic Plan 2015 are several institutional principles subtitled “Creating a Sustainable Environment for the Engaged, Integrated and Global Student Experience.” The first principle speaks for itself: “Build and implement a new business model that increases revenue, reduces costs, and is directly guided by our articulated priorities.”

As reflected in this first principle, conversations and actions around our strategic financial planning process, now named “Comprehensive Resource Review: Promoting Stewardship at Scranton,” continue along on a parallel track to the University’s strategic planning efforts. While the Comprehensive Resource Review is focused on avoiding the projected operating deficits that are projected in the future based on our current model and trajectory, these conversations and efforts are intended to create financial flexibility within the University’s operating budget that allow the University to move forward with institutional priorities identified through the Strategic Plan in a more timely fashion. In many ways the University must move forward on both of these strategic planning processes simultaneously to best position the University for ongoing success in an increasingly competitive environment.

As already indicated, by design the Comprehensive Resource Review is fully integrated with the other important institutional planning processes currently under way. There are direct connections with the Strategic Enrollment Committee as well as academic planning and fund raising efforts, all guided by and linking to our mission. In addition, the Comprehensive Resource Review will integrate with our human resources and facility and technology plans.

In brief, this process is focused on increasing net revenues as well as reducing operating costs over the long term. The goal is to generate \$8-12 million over the next five years. We intend to achieve this goal by tighter leveraging of our financial aid budget, connecting our enrollment targets with our resources, developing new programs to generate additional net revenues, reducing cost of instruction, increasing fundraising, reducing administrative staffing costs, and reviewing opportunities to cut non-personnel related administrative costs.

As part of our longer term financial planning efforts, the University is pleased to announce a Staff Voluntary Window Retirement Plan for full-time staff employees 62 years of age or older with 15 years of service as of May 2015. In addition to helping our longer term

employees, this window plan program can create much needed flexibility for the institution as we address the challenges I referenced earlier. Additional information regarding information sessions will be announced shortly and personalized packages will be sent to all eligible staff employees by early March. I am pleased that we can offer this benefit to our long serving staff who have contributed so much to the University over their careers.

We should not be shortsighted. Commentators on higher education often note the difference between solving problems and achieving goals. At The University of Scranton we are about achieving goals. We are forward-looking. Institutionally, we need answers to the following questions: What can we do? What should we do? What can we do better?

Allow me to suggest a provisional answer(s). Information is not knowledge; knowledge is not education. Rather education is satisfying the hungers or desires of our students that include: integrated knowledge, a global paradigm, civic participation, a moral compass, and adult spirituality. These hungers provide us with an appropriate guidebook for mapping a truly transformational education for our students.

I want to offer a brief word about the University's health care coverage for abortion, a matter important to our mission about which I have already written twice to the faculty and staff. In my letters, I shared my conclusion that, as a Catholic and Jesuit institution, it is necessary for the University to offer insurance plans that are consonant with the teachings of the Church with regard to abortion. While I understand and respect the seriousness and sensitivity of the issue, I want to repeat my hope and prayer that you can understand this necessity regardless of your personal views on the subject of abortion. I also want to thank the faculty and staff who have shared with me their support, concerns and questions. I invite you to continue to do so.

Before ending, let me remind all of us that everything I have talked about today—from strategic planning and financial necessities, to enrollment management and educational innovation—all of it takes place within a context that is ours: the life of this University and the spiritual tradition that animates it.

It is this context that gives meaning to everything we do and makes us who we are as The University of Scranton. This context is, of course, our mission and identity as a Catholic and Jesuit university.

As a recent document from the Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities reminds us, this mission is primarily “the education and formation of students in such a way and in order that they become men and women of faith and of service to their communities.” The education and formation of students for lives of faith and service—this is at the heart of what we do and who we are. Everything we do, and everything I have talked about this morning, is derived from this core mission, a mission that is our inheritance and call as a Catholic and Jesuit university, a mission we are privileged to call our own.

The fulfillment of this mission depends on each and every one of us. I am grateful to all of you for the many ways—most of them hidden and unheralded—in which you make this mission a reality at The University of Scranton. More important, our students and their parents are grateful to you.

Together, every day, we answer God’s call to make The University of Scranton a place where students are invited to become the people they were created to be. To my mind, there is no more important or worthwhile work than that.

I wish you all a blessed and grace-filled Lent. God bless you and God bless The University of Scranton.