



March 21, 2020

Members of Our Alumni Community:

On March 21, 2017 - three years ago today - I walked into the McIlhenny Ballroom with my heart full and a big lump in my throat as I prepared to address the campus after being announced the 27th president of The University of Scranton.

As I reflect on this proud day in my life in the midst of these trying times, I'm reminded of the story of the Very Rev. James P. Sweeney, S.J., who was Provincial of the Society of Jesus in 1942 when the Bishop invited the Jesuits to assume administration of the University. It was a time of great uncertainty for the nation and for higher education, with college enrollments dropping dramatically due to enlistments and the draft. Even so, Fr. Sweeney accepted the invitation, saying:

"...acceptance of your invitation is of course a challenge in these abnormal times, when all colleges are facing a crisis...However, St. Ignatius was never one to run away from a difficult proposition, and we are supposed to imitate his example."

Inspired by this example of hope and faith, the University established the James P. Sweeney, S.J., Family Outreach Fund in 2009, when the recession left many students unable to meet tuition payments. This fund has continued to be a beacon of hope, helping Scranton students stay enrolled after encountering unexpected financial hardship.

Once again the Father Sweeney Fund has emerged as a saving grace for our students. I invite you, if you are so inclined, to make a contribution to the fund in support of those Scranton students who have been, or will be, negatively affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. In Fr. Sweeney's name, we can make sure our students have the means to return home to Scranton when the time is right.

Three years ago, no one could have predicted the challenges we would be facing today, but I can tell you that even knowing what I know now, I would have been proud to follow the example of St. Ignatius and Fr. Sweeney and accept the honor of being your president with all of my heart.

I thank you all for your prayers and for keeping the University at the forefront of your minds during this difficult time. I want you to know it is mutual. I pray each day for the health and protection of our alumni and your families.

Stay strong and stay safe. When this passes, and it will, we will celebrate as only Scranton knows how.

Scott R. Pilarz, S.J.  
President