

Dean's Address to CAS Faculty  
Jason Pierce, Interim Dean  
August 29, 2014, Sears Recital Hall

In early July as Peggy and I reviewed the fall calendar she inquired whether we would gather today. I responded yes, sensitive to the transitions that unfolded rather quickly over the summer and hopeful that by coming together here today we may take brief stock of where we are as a College, welcome our new faculty, celebrate the accomplishments of College faculty and students, and enjoy some conversation at the reception. I'd also like to share what I see as some of the collective work that we have to do in this complex year and to describe some key initiatives that we can advance in this transition year.

I begin my thirteenth year at the University of Dayton and have had the good fortune to work with many of you in various capacities over these years. There are many of you here today whose faces are familiar but I don't know, and I suspect many of you are wondering, "Who is this guy?" We will have various opportunities to meet this semester--more about that later-- and while I'm glad to share a bit about myself here, the focus really needs to be on who we are and who we wish to be.

For the last twelve years I've been a faculty member in the Political Science Department and department chair for the last six years. I've taught a range of undergraduate courses in American politics, courts, and law as well as the Chaminade scholars senior seminar. My research focuses on comparative legal and constitutional matters in various common law countries, with a particular itch for Australia, as well as some work in civic engagement and democratic practice. On the personal front, I was born in Michigan, grew up in a small border town in South Texas. I developed an interest in politics and government through the high school debate club. I attended a small liberal arts college in central Texas, where I came under the spell of two people--my future wife Emily and a professor who planted the idea of going into academics. I completed my graduate work at the University of Texas at Austin where in my final year I had the good fortune to interview for a position in UD's political science department. The rest they say is history.

With the transitions that have and will play out in the College this year there are certain priorities and initiatives that will need to wait. However this should not be a year in which the College treads water. I actually don't think faculty staff and students in the College are inclined toward that.

I see evidence of deep commitment on many fronts, certainly including the staff in O'Reilly Hall. Earlier this year the Dean's office staff engage in a careful review of its work demands

and staffing resources. It was a collaborative, forward looking assessment that led to a reorganization of the office to better meet the evolving administrative demands in the College. This reorganization was implemented in July and we are already seeing results. Carolyn Roecker Phelps started as the new Associate Dean for Faculty Scholarship, Internationalization, and Inclusive Excellence on July 1 and has hit the ground running. Don Pair, Associate Dean for Integrated Learning and Curriculum, continues to manage a seemingly endless list of important initiatives and issues around curriculum, including CAP. Tracy Babel is the new point of contact for issues concerning undergraduate student records. Amanda Alexander is assisting now with many academic advising matters and will work closely with Associate Dean Don Pair and Student Success Specialist Aaron Witherspoon on student success, retention, and persistence efforts. Carol Charbel joined the staff in July to provide much needed administrative support to the associate deans. We are currently advertising for a new staff position -- a Coordinator for College of Arts & Sciences Academic Initiatives -- who will work on CAP course development and management, as well as coordinate courses and initiatives designed to advance experiential learning and CAP's vocation learning outcome. The application window closes Sept 5 so please send potential candidates to the PeopleAdmin site for more information. Finally, I can report that the Dean's office will soon advertise for a new assistant Dean of Student Success. This person will provide comprehensive academic and social support to students within the College to increase student success, retention and persistence. All of these transitions will enable the Dean's Office staff to effectively address the College's priorities and commitments.

As you know this fall the University welcomed a record size first-year class of over 2,200 students. 957 first-year students arrived in the College, which represents a 15% increase from the 2012 and 2013 classes. While one certainly prefers grappling with the challenges of over enrollment rather than under enrollment, the scheduling challenges that 2,200 students present have been very real and have placed significant pressure on many departments that offer first-year courses. I wish to thank the department chairs, Assistant Deans in the College, and Maura Donahue, our budget and facilities director, for meeting the over enrollment challenges head-on. A special thanks goes to the faculty who have taken on overloads and altered their course schedules to accommodate the need.

The Dean's Office staff was responding to this over-enrollment challenge at about the same time a new interim dean showed up with many questions and much to learn. Through it all they have shown patience, professionalism, dedication and good humor. I must draw particular attention to Peggy Braner, who possesses significant skill, deep institutional knowledge, and an ever generous attitude. The entire staff deserves credit for making this transition as smooth as possible. Would you join me in thanking them?

By many measures the College had a very successful 2013-14 academic year.

On the student front, our graduates are reporting high levels of satisfaction and preparedness for life after UD. Every year the university's career services office conducts a Flyer First Destination survey, which records whether the graduates found success within 6 months of graduation--success defined as starting a career, attending graduate school, volunteering in some capacity, or military service. 95% of May 2013 graduates from the College of Arts and Sciences reported that they are taking their preferred next step after UD. 60% are employed, 31% are attending graduate school. Of those employed, 74% see themselves in their chosen field, 16% are in jobs they consider stepping stones toward their chosen field, and only 10% are employed outside their chosen field. And being employed outside one's chosen field isn't necessary a bad thing.

The College had strong representation this summer in many of the university's signature summer programs. Seven College students participated in the Berry Summer Thesis Institute, with projects ranging from studying UD as an interfaith campus, postcolonial poetry, themes of maturation in American literature and society, DNA replication, and gene regulation associated with fruit fly pigmentation. The Honors Program launched a new summer internship program in Washington DC this summer, DCFlyers, where 12 CAS students completed 10-week, high-caliber internships in DC, many working alongside UD alumni. I share these two programs--there are many, many others, of course--just to illustrate the extent to which College students are bringing intellectual leadership to key university programs.

On the faculty front, 2013 proved to be a very productive year for faculty research and scholarship. College faculty published 23 books, 43 book chapters, 153 journal articles, 17 proceedings, and produced 101 performances and exhibitions. College faculty presented their work at conferences across the globe, including Canada, Mexico, Germany, France, Italy, Switzerland, Brazil, India, China, Cameroon, and Japan. This underscores the international engagement of our faculty and the College's ability to support this professional development. College faculty garnered over \$700,000 in new external funding -- new funding -- a figure that tops \$1 million if the spring 2014 semester is included.

While it's hazardous to draw attention to specific funding successes, recognizing that many have been secured this year, let me mention two.

First, the Fitz Center successfully landed in July a six-figure Americorps grant. With this grant, 25 UD students and seven youth from Daybreak youth shelter will become Americorps volunteers this fall for semester and year-long service. The Fitz Center is partnering with Daybreak and St. Vincent Depaul's men's and women's homeless shelters.

The Americorp members will tutor vulnerable youth toward GED completion, guidance in applying for and enrolling in college, and skill development for employment, personal finance and self-care. The Fitz Center is fortunate to have Staci Daniels-Sommers on staff helping to implement and manage this important grant.

The second grant, awarded this June comes from the Association of American Colleges & Universities to improve the diversity of students in UD's Computer Science Department. As a grant recipient, UD was one of 20 institutions selected for AAC&U's TIDES Initiative-- Teaching to Increase Diversity & Equity in STEM. This three year grant, totaling \$300,000, will support curricular and faculty development that helps attract, engage and retain women and other underrepresented students in the field of computer science. Don Pair and Mehdi Zargham, chairperson in Computer Science, led this effort, which is UD's first significant award to support computer science education. I congratulate the individuals working on both grants for the creativity, entrepreneurship, and collaboration they brought to the effort.

In recent faculty addresses then Dean Paul Benson discussed a number of strategic priorities for the College including: 1) bolstering its academic reputation and research productivity, particularly through interdisciplinary research, 2) advancing inclusive excellence in the College by increasing retention and graduation rates, improving career and graduate school placement rates, and bringing further diversity to our student and faculty ranks, and 3) continuing to develop distinctive high quality programs for integrative learning grounded in the liberal arts and sciences. These remain important priorities and we have opportunities this year to advance each. Let me spend a few minutes discussing each.

### **First, bolstering interdisciplinary research**

One of the university's greatest assets is its comprehensive nature -- the fact that we deliver a learning experience for students and a teaching and research experience for faculty that draw upon the College of Arts and Sciences and the professional schools. It positions us well to advance interdisciplinary research and scholarship. This is occurring across the University in formal and informal ways, and rightly so. Many of the most vexing questions tackled in the academy demand scholarship that is simultaneously deeply rooted in the knowledge and methods of specific disciplines, but also that branches out to engage other disciplines. Public, foundation, individual, and corporate funders recognized this and are looking to support interdisciplinary research endeavors.

By way of example, last October President Curran committed the University to establishing an interdisciplinary research center that focuses on human rights. Building on a 20-year

legacy of leadership in human rights education, UD's Human Rights Center, housed in the College, will engage faculty and students across the University as well as human rights organizations and advocates to find transformative solutions to systemic patterns of injustice. Its research emphases are intentionally conceived in broad terms. First the Center focuses on root causes of human rights violations--those material, political, economic, and cultural conditions that trigger human rights violations. Second the Center supports research on human rights advocacy, which attempts to understand how individuals and organizations can effectively advance human rights claims and causes. The Center's mission is intentionally defined in these broad terms because we want to bring the assets of a comprehensive Catholic and Marianist institution to these questions.

Mark Ensalaco, Natalie Hudson, Joel Pruce and many others in the faculty, Dean's Office and Advancement have invested significant time and attention conceptualizing and preparing the launch the Center. This year will be a crucial year for this work. I appreciate Associate Dean Carolyn Roecker Phelp's willingness to work with Mark and others this year to advance a set of research, fundraising, and other implementation goals.

I share this because the Center will be one of several places in the College where interdisciplinary research is and will be taking place. Moreover, it's important for you to know that while the Center's mission is established, the research that it supports is evolving and open to others. There are a few anchor projects for the Center, but this year will be one in which flesh is put to the bone, so to speak, so I invite you consider ways in which your research could contribute to this interdisciplinary endeavor and others that are and will come on-line.

The College remains committed to helping faculty advance their research and scholarship, including opportunities for external support. In the spring semester a number of faculty from the humanities and performing and visual arts divisions participated in a series of grant writing workshops that Jennifer Speed, the College's Coordinator of Grants & Funding, facilitated. The workshops generated over \$200,000 in grant applications to the National Endowment for the Humanities. They are awaiting word on the outcome, but whatever that may be, participants found the workshops very beneficial. Jennifer and I have discussed how the College can build upon this workshop model and you'll see some additional opportunities this year. First, the College will host this fall Mary Connelly from UDRI. Dr. Connelly will demystify UDRI's role facilitating research across the College and discuss a number of funding opportunities. Second, Jennifer Speed has agreed to conduct two sets of workshops next spring for faculty who want to learn more about external research funding and put together a grant application. More information will be forthcoming regarding the fall and spring events in the near term.

Let me mention one further idea concerning faculty development. The Dean's Office will organize and facilitate workshops for newly hired tenure-track faculty in the College. These workshops provide important information about tenure-track expectations and strategies, so I ask newly hired tenure-track faculty member to prioritize these meetings. While the support structures for tenure track faculty have long been in place, the College recognizes the need for professional development opportunities for our non-tenure-track full-time faculty as well. Dr. Roecker Phelps is in the midst of planning a series of professional development workshops this academic year for newly hired lecturers, with the idea of developing similar opportunities for returning lecturers.

## **Second, inclusive excellence**

The second key initiative this year concerns inclusive excellence. Creating a diverse and inclusive learning and working environment is indispensable to the educational mission of UD. As an institution whose founding order embraced and thrived because of differences, UD knows an inclusive and diverse culture fosters a rich learning environment and prepares our students as global citizens. We value a humble search for wisdom and truth and affirm that we advance knowledge and strengthen our community through our diverse gifts, ideas, backgrounds and perspectives.

Inclusive excellence must remain a College priority and we must encourage broader ownership and collaborative commitment to it among faculty, staff and students. As you know, we're pursuing inclusive excellence through the curriculum, co- and extra-curricular opportunities, the campus culture, faculty hiring, and in student recruitment, retention, persistence and success to name a few.

On the student recruitment front, this last year the College worked closely with Enrollment Management to build a more diverse student applicant pool. Academic Success Specialist Aaron Witherspoon reached out to hundreds of underrepresented prospective students early in the application process to answer questions they had about UD or the application process. Dr. Verb Washington from the History Department attended several hotel receptions around the country, meeting with admitted students and their parents. The efforts of Aaron, Verb and many others are showing results. Compared to the 2013 incoming undergraduate class, the 2014 class has 130 more students of domestic diversity, a 9-point increase on average SAT score, .3 increase on the average ACT score, 256 more students with a SAT over 1200, and 187 more students from families with annual income less than \$100k. This year the university welcomes 70 African American students, 106 Hispanic student, 33 Asian or Pacific Islanders, and 52 students who identify as multiracial or multiethnic. A significant percentage of these students begin their academic careers in the College.

On the faculty hiring front, the College made important strides this past year hiring more women, historically underrepresented faculty and international faculty for its full-time positions. This Wednesday 17 new tenure-track faculty started in the College, 5 men and 12 women. Five of the new tenure track professors come from other countries, 3 are from historically underrepresented groups.

Sixteen full-time lecturers started as well (parenthetically, this is a much larger number of lecturer hires than we anticipated--12 of the 16 were hired over the summer due to late faculty resignations and over-enrollments). Seven are women, 9 are men, 2 come from outside the US and 3 are from historically underrepresented groups.

I hope several of our new faculty join us this afternoon. Would you please join me in welcoming our new College faculty?

This year will be another busy hiring year for the College. We'll conduct 18 tenure-line and 5 lecturer searches. Seven of 18 tenure-line searches are new tenure lines.

Through our collective efforts, I'm confident we will continue to attract a talented and diverse applicant pool and hire faculty who embrace UD's educational mission and our teacher-scholar model. Wiebke Diestelkamp and Peggy DesAutels will continue to serve as equity advisors in the College. This year they will consult with departments conducting searches on how best they can work with chairs and search committees. They'll also conduct some additional workshops this spring around tenure and promotion activities. I value their contributions and appreciate your collaboration with them.

My colleagues and I in the Dean's Office are exploring a number of other ways to advance inclusive excellence. We are in the exploratory stage, but there are any number of possibilities. Those include pipeline initiatives, where relationships are built with underrepresented graduate students before they go on the job market, and postdoctoral fellowships that help recruit and retain talented individuals. We're also exploring opportunities to partner with HBCUs to facilitate student and faculty exchanges around collaborative research and experiential learning.

I am particularly intrigued with research from George Kuh and others who find that high impact practices (HIPs) that foster deep student learning--practices such as living-learning communities, service learning courses, internships and capstones--are shown to have an even greater impact on students from historically underrepresented groups. Indeed, research finds higher GPAs, higher retention rates and other manifestations of deep learning among minority and first-generation college students who complete multiple HIPs

as part of their undergraduate careers than their counterparts who do not. With CAP now in place and the university emphasizing experiential learning, more students will reap the benefits of participating in multiple HIPs. The College needs to closely monitor student participation and access to HIPs, particularly those that can be financially burdensome, such as unpaid internships or study abroad experiences. And I'd like to explore ways that we can open HIPs to more students, including students from historically underrepresented groups.

### **Third, advancing a distinctive liberal arts and sciences curriculum**

It was seven years ago that the Marianist Education Working Group produced *Habits of Inquiry and Reflection*, a document that guided the university as it redesigned its general education program. Hundreds of folks have worked on the Common Academic Program and we begin this semester our second year under it. The CAP curriculum is taking shape and there is much to do in the near term - implement the capstone component, "CAPify" daylighted courses, and map CAP to the individual majors. This year is an important year for CAP and I appreciate everyone's sustained creativity and commitment to it.

In recent years, with the economic downturn and rising higher ed sticker prices, the liberal arts and sciences have come under heightened criticism for allegedly failing to prepare graduates for real-world careers. As the musical number from the Tony Award winning musical Avenue Q poses, "What Do I Do with a BA in English?" Is Andy Slade here? I'm sure Andy will back me up--in truth, you can do a lot with BAs, including BAs in English. But I'm not sure our BA students and their parents are as confident as they should be on this matter.

It's understandable that parents and students take an increasingly closer look at the value proposition of any undergraduate degree, including one in the liberal arts and sciences. And yet study after study point to the fact that employers want to hire people with the skills acquired through a liberal arts and sciences degree. Survey work from Hart Research Associates indicates those include critical thinking, written and oral communication skills, the ability to solve complex problems, possessing and exercising ethical judgment and integrity, intercultural skills, and a capacity for new learning. They find that 74% of employers surveyed would recommend a liberal arts education to a young person as the best way to prepare for success in today's global economy. (I won't discuss now other research pointing to the capacity of liberal arts and sciences degrees to foster civically engaged leaders who give back to their communities in many ways. Let's just focus on liberal arts and science graduates securing jobs.



One challenge we have is equipping our liberal arts and sciences students with the capacity and confidence to translate their liberal arts and science education--along with their co-curricular and extracurricular accomplishments--to the skills that employers say they want in their employees. There's important work to be done here. Jason Eckert and I will be convening a group this semester to look at how we prepare our students to talk about their liberal arts and science degrees to potential internship hosts and employers. This group will develop a set of short-term and longer-term actions the College can take in partnership with others.

With all of these initiatives I welcome your input and involvement. In these final minutes, I'll briefly mention three College-wide matters that will require our collective attention this semester.

First, Provost Benson sent an email earlier today to College faculty announcing the structure for a national search for the next dean of the College. The committee has formed and will begin its work with the search firm Isaacson, Miller. I know the College faculty and staff will engage in this search process fully.

Second, after several years of careful study and pilots, the university will launch at the end of the fall 2014 semester the new Student Evaluation of Teaching instrument. Here in the College, the evaluation will be conducted online with students responding to eight Likert-type questions and four open-ended questions. The SET Coordinator in the LTC, Susan Brown, has been working with her LTC colleagues and others across campus to ensure a smooth roll out. There will be extensive faculty development and training around the new SET this semester and I encourage you to participate in that.

Third, you'll recall that an academic climate survey was administered in April 2014 to faculty reporting to deans, UDRI or an associate provost. The results from that survey are in. Provost Benson has asked each unit to facilitate a series of conversations early this term about the survey results and ways the unit and university may respond.

Details are still being worked out about how the data will be shared, but I can report at this point that I will convene a total of 5 open forums for College faculty and staff--two sessions for tenured faculty, two sessions for tenure-track/lecturers/adjunct faculty/artists-in-residence and one session for staff. Each forum will be 75 minutes in length. My goal in the forums is to take a clear-eyed look at the numbers and then have a forward-focused, action-oriented discussion. While we'll convene as a unit, the data shared and our conversation will address College and university-wide matters. Finally, these meetings will be the first of several this academic year as we work together on this issue. Please plan on attending one of the sessions.

There are a few notable events in the next several weeks. Next Friday we have the Fall semester faculty meeting. The agenda will include remarks from Interim Provost Paul Benson. On Sept 18, the university holds the STARS Symposium, which celebrates faculty research and scholarship. Five College faculty will present their research. Please plan on attending, keeping in mind the presentations are short (20 minutes) and pitched to a general audience. I draw particular attention to the 9 am session where we will remember Physics faculty member Peter Powers, who died earlier this year. Finally, I invite you to the endowed chairs installation ceremony on September 26. Ellen Fleischmann will be installed as the new Alumni Chair in the Humanities and Roger Reeb will be installed as the Rev. Raymond A. Roesch Chair in the Social Sciences. Finally, I draw your attention to the Fall 2014 arts brochure and the many scheduled events.

By way of conclusion, as we begin this transition year, it's important we recognize the challenges we face---that we're transparent and honest with ourselves--but we also remind ourselves of the challenges that other institutions are grappling with that we've avoided. Let's also recognize that students are largely oblivious to the transitions that have and will play out this year, except to the extent they diminishes our creativity, our willingness to collaborate, and our patience with them and each other.

Transitions are inherently unsettling, all the more so in a low-trust environment. But they also present opportunities--opportunities to take stock of who we are and who we want to become. Everyone needs to be at the table.

We need our longer serving faculty to remind us of the strengths and wisdom deeply embedded in the history of this institution. New faculty--we need your energy, fresh ideas, and yes, your perspectives from other institutions.

In this transition year, I ask everyone to bring a critical, exacting eye but to avoid cynicism, to give the benefit of the doubt, and indeed, even to practice forgiveness. With a commitment to collaboration, consultation and transparency, we can advance these shared goals. We will figure this out in community.

Thank you for your time and attention. I invite you now to the Torch Lounge for a reception celebrating the start of the academic year.