

Fall Faculty Meeting 2013
Provost's Address
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Preface

Instead of delivering the Provost's Address in the manner that has been customary for many years, I chose this fall to comment briefly on three separate topics. I have provided below the texts of those comments and I have added directions for faculty to respond to the initiatives I outlined. Please accept this invitation to participate in any way you can to help shape the future of the University of Dayton.

Welcome to New Faculty

I would like to extend a personal welcome to those of you who are here at a fall faculty meeting for the first time.

There is nothing I enjoy more than meeting our new faculty. We are thrilled to have you with us. There are many things we want to tell you about, but more importantly, we have much to learn from you. We ask you to share with us your energy, your ideas, and the great promise you bring for enriching our future together.

Staying at the Table: Building a New ELC

When it began many years ago, the ELC, our standard shorthand for the Educational Leadership Council, was a good idea. And it worked pretty well for a long time. Eventually, however, it became too big and unwieldy. Ironically, the bigger it became, the more people felt excluded from it. Although it continued to do some good work, it gradually bogged down and became a venue for giving reports rather than for discussing policy, formulating strategy, and making decisions. When it was finally dissolved, people actually cheered.

As most of you know, one of the most enduring and admirable characteristics of this Marianist University is our commitment to staying at the table. The old ELC was intended to serve as a good table at which University leaders could resolve problems and plan for the future. But after many years of staying at that table, we weren't accomplishing very much. So we got rid of the table.

Now we are in a good position to learn from that experience. We are ready to build a new table. The administration and the Senate together believe it is time to reinvent the ELC.

This new ELC will be smaller, more flexible, and more responsive. It will invite people from across the University to meet with the ELC to better enable it to address whatever subject is under discussion. The proceedings of the ELC will be accessible from both the Academic Senate's and the Provost's websites. I want to express my strong support for the Senate's commitment to working with the administration on improving the quality, transparency, and substantive nature of our communication. The better we do this the better we will become as a University.

Learning for a Global Future

We have been very successful in attracting excellent students and faculty from many cultures and from around the world to our Dayton campus. This reflects a commitment we made several years ago to make the University of Dayton a truly multicultural and international university. Now we need to take further steps in that direction.

In addition to redoubling our efforts to increase our diversity here on campus, we must focus our attention on a different idea of what it means to be multicultural and international.

In other words, the term “international” should not describe only those who come here from abroad. It should include our American students and faculty at UD who study and conduct research and pursue service learning around the world. In the course of doing such work, many more of us can become global citizens with the skills and experiences that will be invaluable in a truly global future that has, in fact, already arrived.

We have a long history of providing education abroad programs. But with a few exceptions, these tend to be brief and insular. Our American students travel abroad with our UD faculty to take UD courses for about a month overseas. Even when this is done well, it’s not enough. The Center for International Programs is working to improve in this area by focusing more on the needs of departments and units. But we need to do better, and we ought to engage a higher percentage of our students and our faculty in international study and research.

In order for our students and our faculty to become more aware of, and more directly involved in, the realities and complexities of contemporary global life, we need to provide opportunities and encouragement, and eventually, I believe, we need to construct requirements that will make sure that as many as possible have a significant learning experience abroad. We need to develop semester-long and year-long programs through partnerships with other institutions and through initiatives such as our University of Dayton China Institute.

One of the key goals of our University of Dayton Strategic Plan is to “Advance International and Intercultural Citizenship and Engagement.” We cannot fulfill this goal just by bringing students from abroad to UD or with a handful of very limited summer programs. I also know this goal cannot be met by administrative directive. We need to hear from faculty members, we need to hear from departments, we need to hear from the Schools and the College. We especially need to hear about ideas that can bring various disciplines together and attract a wide variety of students.

So in collaboration with those across UD who are engaged in multicultural and international initiatives and programs, I will consult with the Deans and I will ask them in turn to talk with their departments. We will be looking for ideas that show promise for leading to rigorous, multicultural, sustainable programming aimed at internationalizing our American students and faculty. We will develop procedures for investing in such

ideas and do all we can to move forward with the goal of ensuring that UD is a locus of multicultural and international engagement.

New Needs and New Possibilities

In my fall address last year, I spoke about an evolutionary process of learning and teaching that moves from transmission through transaction to transformation. In the context of those reflections I said we need to be clear who we are and what we stand for. But I added that we also need to ask the open-ended question: “What could we become?” I will return to that question this year. But first I would like to suggest a framework for thinking about it.

I ask each of you to consider your own department. Imagine that you were starting from scratch, that you were invited to build an academic structure in your field from the ground up. Imagine that you wanted to create something that would be attractive, engaging, and challenging to your students, majors and non-majors alike, and to your departmental colleagues. Imagine that your primary commitment would be to deliver an education that reflects real world needs of the present and the future, and that equips your students to address those needs.

Also imagine what opportunities might exist if your department were to collaborate with other departments and transcend the confines of academic disciplines. Imagine ways in which you could respond to the rapidly increasing influence of globalization. Imagine you were encouraged to explore the full range of pedagogical possibilities from traditional classroom presence through the latest forms of information technology in order to discover what works best for you and your students. Imagine ways in which your students could benefit from experiential learning that is fully integrated into your academic structure.

As you imagine these things, keep circling back to this question: If I were given the opportunity to start from scratch to build an academic structure in my field from the ground up, would it look and work exactly like the structure we have in place now? If your answer is, “Yes, I think my department is perfect just as it is. I wouldn’t change a thing,” you are incredibly lucky. And please tell me which department you are in.

Which reminds me of a remark by Garry Brewer, a former dean at the University of Michigan: “The world has problems, but universities have departments.”

Brewer is one of several academics that have explored the potential meanings, values, and pitfalls of interdisciplinary, intra-disciplinary, trans-disciplinary, and even post-disciplinary work. Interesting though they are, we don’t have time to venture down those paths this afternoon. So let me return to the matter of your departments.

We all know it is extremely hard for even a single department to see beyond its habits and to change itself in response to new needs, new ideas, new conditions, and new technologies. To imagine that an entire university could do this seems like sheer fantasy. If we change at all, we do so with the greatest reluctance. We change as little as we can

get away with, and we change as slowly as possible. We're all too busy to bother changing anything. It's hard enough just getting through the semester. Things are good enough as they are, aren't they? The future can take care of itself.

Actually, I don't think it will. I believe we need to create our own future. We will need to adapt and change simply in order to survive. We will need to do those things wisely and creatively if we are to flourish. So I am asking all of you to return with me to the question I posed one year ago: "What could we become?"

I will ask each Dean to raise these issues within each School and within the College. I will ask them to ensure that each department addresses this challenge. I will ask the Deans to meet with one another to explore options for cross-unit collaboration just as they will ask departments to look for inter-departmental opportunities. And I will ask the Deans to consult with the Academic Senate, with Enrollment Management, Career Services and Student Development, and with those in Academic Affairs and Learning Initiatives.

As a University we need to be more attentive to the future needs of our students, not just the needs they have today. While always keeping our mission and identity in mind, we need to assess the vitality, the effectiveness, and the relevance of all our current programs. And we need to see what needs are currently not being met and what possibilities we should explore going forward. We have done a very good job in this area in some of our graduate programs. It is time to follow suit with our undergraduate programs.

Keep in mind that concentrations are of increasing interest to students and particularly multi-disciplinary concentrations. Our Sustainability, Energy, and the Environment initiative and our Human Rights program are excellent examples of creative, mission-driven undertakings that started small and have grown into dynamic, distinctive, and rigorous programs that attract many students as well as national attention. I am sure that many more such possibilities are waiting to be articulated and developed.

And we should do this expediently. My goal is to have some proposals to put before the Board of Trustees when they meet in May of next year. So please begin right away to imagine the kinds of possibilities I have outlined for self-renewal. Please promote these discussions within and beyond your departments, and with your Deans.

I look forward to many conversations, many ideas, and many proposals on all three of the topics I have touched on this afternoon.

An Invitation to Participate

As I mentioned in my preface and reiterated within the context of my remarks, I invite and encourage the faculty to take an active role in defining and shaping these initiatives and moving them forward.

In her own remarks at the Fall Faculty Meeting, Academic Senate President Carolyn Roecker-Phelps emphasized that she was not only reporting on the work of the Senate; she was also inviting the faculty to become involved in the work of the Senate. The administration and the Senate are committed to dialogue, transparency, and cooperation in all our interactions. But we both need to hear from the faculty on the many initiatives we seek to advance for the greater good of the University.

These projects will all have significant effects on the future of our University. We know that our faculty have the intellectual resources, the creativity, the energy, and the vision to make them successful.