



From the Office of the President

John P. Fitzgibbons, S.J.

REGIS UNIVERSITY | DENVER, COLORADO

**Welcome to Regis University
Family Reception during Orientation Week
Sports Authority Field
August 21, 2014**

Allow me to add to the chorus of welcomes to Regis University!

Since our student body president, Ellen, has been busy introducing other people, I thought it would only be helpful or illuminative to start with a story about her.

Just a few years ago, Ellen was a first-year student like you. She came to campus, probably a little anxious, but excited too, for the next stage in her great journey. And just like you, she was enrolled in our first-year writing seminar. As part of that course, she and each of her classmates were required to participate in a service-learning experience.

Coming from a Jesuit high school, Ellen had done service before. She'd worked with children and enjoyed it, but felt like she wanted to push herself further. There was one opportunity that spoke to her heart more than others – tutoring men who were transitioning from prison back into society.

Her parents, as you can imagine, were not as excited about the possibility of her working at a halfway house. And truthfully, she had some hesitancy herself. Not only would it push her outside her comfort zone, but she wasn't sure what she could possibly teach people who had so much more life experience than her. Would they have anything in common? Would she make any real difference?

But Ellen listened to her heart and decided to take the risk.

The experience was not easy. It challenged her in unexpected ways. Building relationships, it turned out, was not the primary challenge. Instead, as she got closer with the men, she found herself coming back to Regis with questions: Is there a difference between the choices people make and the choices that are made for them: by birth, geography, society, class? What stereotypes do we have about people who have been to prison? Why isn't our culture doing more to prevent people from entering the system?

Ellen and her classmates would grapple with these questions and others each week in class. There would be heated discussion, and sometimes, tears. There were times when she felt overwhelmed or frustrated or helpless and she would seek out advice from her professor. He helped her process those feelings and come to her own conclusions.



These experiences – in the halfway house and classroom – changed the course of Ellen’s time at Regis, and possibly her life. Three years later, she still works at that halfway house. She learned that by sharing her story, and the story of the men, she could begin the process of breaking down stereotypes, laying the groundwork for social change. She is aiming for a career that enables her to continue doing important work like this, possibly as a writer and storyteller.

These types of learning experiences are happening every day at Regis University. They happen whenever a student opens up her or his soul to a truth, a truth that will possibly hurt a little or a lot. They happen when a student stretches toward the margins – of society and their own comfort zone – and lets God’s grace work in and through them. Such experiences are the beginning of becoming whole. They are the process of education.

Let me ask the parents and family members here: What was your favorite moment in your education? Was there a teacher or classmate who opened your eyes and your heart to a deeper reality? Was there a transformation in the way you know yourself and our world? That transformation is precisely the goal of Jesuit Catholic education. It is the legacy and promise of Regis University.

If there is a method to Jesuit higher education – and there is – it can be summed up by three words: **Experience, Reflection, Action**. This trio is the articulation of the Ignatian Pedagogical Paradigm. St. Ignatius, the founder of the Jesuits, was a pragmatic romantic. At the foundation of all we Jesuits and colleagues do, there is this method of **Experiencing the real; Reflecting on what you have experienced; and Acting in accord with the best of your reflections**.

That’s why Jesuit universities are extraordinary places. The dynamic of moving from experience, through reflection, to action demands rigor and compassion, diligence and courage; it keeps Regis from being an ivory tower and assures that we remain engaged with reality, not fantasy, that we imagine new possibilities and opportunities.

But let’s not forget that education does put us in a position of privilege. That’s a fact. If 100 people represented the entire world population, only one of those would have a college education. Think about that for a minute.

Your parents are giving you a rare gift, as are the many generous donors who help Regis provide financial aid to more than 95 percent of our traditional undergraduate students.

With such a gift, it is imperative to ask: What will you do with that privilege?



Here's the good news: You don't have to answer that question today. Regis will help you figure it out. That's what we do! Jesuit schools are not merely places that advance knowledge, conduct cutting-edge research and prepare professionals – **THOUGH WE DO ALL OF THAT!!** Regis University has at the heart of our mission a deep concern for the growth and development of you, our students.

In fact, Regis lives out the Ignatian ideal of *cura personalis* better than any Jesuit school I know. *Cura personalis* is a Latin phrase that means “care for the whole person” – mind, body and soul. Nowhere have I seen professors or staff more attentive to each student's individual needs.

In fact, we are always looking for better ways to meet your needs and the needs of our world.

That's why I like to say that Regis is a university on the move, always evolving. In the next year, we will be opening two new colleges, launching a comprehensive campaign to enhance our facilities and provide more financial aid, introducing research-based doctorates, investing in the local community and working to globalize our campus.

You will be part of that. And you will benefit from it.

Your Regis journey starts today. If you are willing and open, Regis will help you get in touch with your deepest longings, your passions. You will be asked to walk to the limits of your comfort zone and beyond, in the search of truth and understanding. And if you do, if you embrace those experiences, if you listen to your heart and take the risk, you will be transformed.

You are already leaders among your peers. You wouldn't be here if you weren't. Now you have another opportunity – the chance to grow into leaders who will change our community and our world.

Here is my promise: I will pray for you every day – as I hope you will for me – so that you will have the courage and diligence you need on this next great journey.

Thank you and God bless!