



From the Office of the President

John P. Fitzgibbons, S.J.

REGIS UNIVERSITY | DENVER, COLORADO

**2016 Ignatian Heritage Day and University Convocation
President's State of the University Address
St. John Francis Regis Chapel
August 16, 2016**

Thank you, Dr. Reynolds, not only for the introduction but for all the hard work you and your staff have dedicated to making this day possible.

I want to echo both the welcome to today's activities and my appreciation to all of you for joining us today as we celebrate our Jesuit heritage and look forward to the coming year. Before we come to my annual State of the University remarks, I would like us to take some time for reflection on our own lives and values—using the guided reflection process that Jesuits and those who work with us have developed over the centuries since the time of St. Ignatius Loyola, our founder.

This Examination of our own interior Consciousness, or Examen, was the prayer that Ignatius asked Jesuits to make at least once a day, even if they could not manage the time for any other prayer or refectio. In modern language, he knew that we all need to take some time each day to “un-plug”—to remind ourselves of the importance of attending to our interior dynamics, reactions, and desires—as this reflective consciousness is the privileged place where God can be at work with us and invite us into deeper relationship.

We struggle to find such reflective time in our own lives today, especially with the way we are bombarded by so much wonderful and occasionally addictive technology. But even in Ignatius' time, he knew that if we did not take time to become “Contemplatives in Action” we would lose our ability to discern what's really important in our lives. This Examen reflection has been particularly important in my own life and spirituality, especially during the moments when it seems that I can only find a few minutes of quiet for interior listening and prayer.

So today, I am inviting all of us to take some time for this kind of reflection before we move to the news of our upcoming year. To guide us in this Examen reflection, I invite up my Jesuit brother, Fr. Dirk Dunfee, a member of our Regis Jesuit community, who is a faculty member in our Rueckert-Hartman College of Health Professions, a Nurse Practitioner in our Regis Neighborhood Health Clinic, and a member of our Mission staff.



Introduction

Thanks, Dirk, for that wonderful reflection. Later this morning, over our lunch conversations, we'll provide some materials on the Jesuit Examen for those who are interested.

Let's turn now to the State of our University.

We gather at this time each year to consider the state of our university. To me, this means we celebrate our past achievements, and preview our intentions for the coming year. In the past few years, this address has focused on the University's financial condition. You all know well that improving our financial well being has been a top priority.

2 Today I am excited to announce we will begin the academic year financially stable. Instead of primarily focusing on how to fix elements of our past, this year we will focus on planning for a bright future in our academic and administrative enterprises.

Financial Condition

First, let's reflect on how far we have come. In August of 2014 after budget deliberations, I shared with you that our spending plan exceeded our income by \$5.4 million. Much like a household budget that discovers it is living beyond its means, it was necessary that we carefully scrutinize spending. Thanks to you and your many efforts, spending controls helped us end fiscal year 2016 with a modest positive balance. Let me emphasize that this was no small feat. At the same time that you were working hard to control spending this year, our investment portfolio lost ground. (Many of you also experienced this in your personal finances.) Nonetheless, your hard work has created a solid platform upon which we will be able to advance our priorities for Regis this year, in many areas. Most prominently, this will push forward our campus master plan initiative that focuses on our infrastructure needs for:

- 1) improved academic space; and
- 2) additional and improved housing and student-focused facilities.

Our efforts furthering our master plan to-date include:

- In June, our Board of Trustees approved and funded proceeding with a master planning effort;
- We have retained a national firm to perform a market study on our campus housing needs;
- Multiple capital improvement projects began this spring and summer. We replaced the HVAC system in our field house – made possible, in part, by a generous donation of the equipment; and
- We began the first of five phases to renovate Main Hall. The renovation of Main Hall, is donor funded through the President's Excellence Fund.



You will hear much more about our campus master plan efforts this year – and you will be an important part of this planning.

I will be working diligently this year with prospective and existing donors to enable us to do much more. In April, the Board of Trustees approved the Rise & Ignite Comprehensive Campaign – a \$150 million Comprehensive Campaign to advance student, faculty, program and facility support. We have already raised over \$25 million as of July, 17.9% toward our goal. This year, we will progress into the leadership gift phase of the Campaign and this, along with our improved financial condition I reference earlier, I am confident will help us achieve the stature that Regis University deserves.

Our improved financial condition allowed us to successfully refinance our debt last spring, at a much lower interest rate. Yet, for fiscal year 2017, important work surrounding the University's financial health remains. There are still some budgets that need to be aligned with our three-year spending plan meaning some budget adjustments are still needed in the coming year. College and department leaders were made aware over the summer of the necessary adjustments and are currently working to incorporate these adjustments into our budget. I know this can be difficult, but please understand how critical this work is, and how much this work is appreciated by me and University leadership.

I would also like to highlight that part of our success in balancing our budget is due to a shift in mentality by budget managers. A shift from concern over one's own budget, to viewing each College and department budget as part of one University budget. Folks, we are all in this together and your area will only be as successful as your neighbor's.

In addition, this year we will continue to work toward our ultimate financial goal of saving roughly 4 percent of our income, or about \$5 million annually. While this will still take us a few years to achieve, it is important that we continue our good spending habits now to achieve this important goal. I need your continued help in productivity, efforts to control spending, and shared goals, to accomplish this.

Total Rewards

While there is a continued need for financial vigilance, we have positioned ourselves to be able to begin to address my top priority – recognizing and rewarding our faculty and staff.

I am so pleased to announce that effective September 1, 2016, we will raise base salaries for regular faculty and staff. Although it will be a modest raise, it will be the largest raise awarded in recent years. After considering all possible approaches to increasing base salaries, I settled on raises based on your income. I am taking this approach to address the increase in the cost of living in the



Denver metro area – that affects our workforce differently – and because I feel strongly that it is just and right to share most of the money set aside for raises, with those making the least.

In addition, I have asked that Deans and Cabinet members to take an exemption from receiving a raise.

I understand that you likely have questions about your raise, and so you will receive an email later today from my office with additional detail. In that communication, you will be able to email questions directly to my office that my staff and I will answer, about this or anything else.

In addition to a raise, the Total Rewards planning group has already begun to address a number of other compensation questions on campus. For example:

- Numerous salary market adjustments have been made. We will continue to make market adjustments as we are able and as is necessary.
- In addition, we are diligently reviewing non-exempt positions to ensure we are complying with new Fair Labor Standards Act regulation that will take effect December 1, 2016.

Our review of salaries will continue this year. For example:

- Compensation and engagement for Affiliate Faculty is being reviewed by our Total Rewards group and this as a priority within our academic enterprise.
- We are considering a Board-level executive compensation committee to create an external body to review salaries for senior leadership .

Beyond compensation, our Total Rewards group will continue to implement non-compensation related workplace improvements to further respond to the employee engagement survey conducted last year. The areas you identified have shaped our focus and include:

- 1) professional development;
- 2) advancement opportunities;
- 3) management and leadership development; and
- 4) review of all benefits.

If you have questions about our Total Rewards effort, please contact Tony Crow, Chair of the group, or the other members, which include Dr. Janet Houser, Dr. Mike Ghedotti and Brett Vogel.

One more exciting announcement I'd like to make is that we will again award the gift of time this year, meaning we will close campus between the Christmas and New Year's holidays.



Academics

It's been a remarkable year on the academic front. Dr. Pat Ladewig handed the baton to our new Provost, Dr. Janet Houser, who is already out of the gate at top speed and putting her signature on our academic enterprise. Her commitment to be your inclusive and transparent leader is already apparent, as she will present in more detail at staff and faculty meetings in the coming weeks. Dr. Houser has already restructured the academic enterprise to be more efficient and flatter. She's also empowered faculty to tend to the quality of our curriculum through the newly created Regis University Academic Council. RUAC - a word that closely resembles the Hebrew word "ruach" which means breath, spirit, or wind - is a faculty-led body focused on assuring we deliver the best possible learning opportunities to our students. I applaud Dr. Houser's goal of helping make Regis a university that values the richness brought about by a diversity of students, faculty and programs, preserves what is best about us, and delivers a quality, rigorous curriculum taught by the best faculty anywhere.

I will also ask Dr. Houser and other University leaders to revisit our Strategic Plan this year to assess its implementation and recommend next steps. I want to assure you that our Strategic Plan is not a static set of documents and plans, and was not a one-time exercise. Our Strategic Plan is a living document and process which needs to be continually revisited and adapted to our current needs. Our first step is to develop a scorecard together to assess how well we are accomplishing the Strategic Plan.

Diversity is a critical issue. Accordingly, the University will implement the initial phase of our Diversity and Inclusion plan, as recommended by our Diversity Council. Just two weeks ago, Cabinet members, Academic Deans, Associate Vice Presidents and I participated in a workshop lead by Dr. Dena Samuels, an expert on Equity and Inclusion in Education. Faculty across campus will be invited to participate in the same workshop next month.

This workshop began a productive and deeply contemplative conversation about how Regis University can be a more inclusive and equitable university and community. This year, we hope to increase conversation on this campus about what we as a community stand for with respect to privilege, access to education, academic success for all students, race relations, matters related to sexual orientation and gender identity, immigration, and poverty - as examples - on our campus, in our community and in the world. Our nation is struggling to figure out how to love and embrace our differences, no matter an individual's personal characteristics or level of privilege. Regis University needs to be a beacon of hope and we need to demonstrate inclusiveness on our campus to the city of Denver, to our region and to the country. This year, we will ask tough questions and be open to the answers.

Our Jesuit heritage makes a natural leader in providing solutions to these challenges. That is our obligation to the 500 new Freshmen joining us here at Regis later this week. This outstanding



group of young people, coupled with last year's record setting class, means that we will have enrolled the two largest consecutive Freshman classes in Regis history. This is something about which I am incredibly proud.

Another critical area of focus this academic year is governance at Regis University. The Cabinet and I have been working with our Board of Trustees to reshape Board governance and Board engagement with the University. We have also had many conversations and will be continuing conversations about faculty-led participatory governance that furthers the mission of the University and permeates both our academic and administrative operations.

We cannot do our good work without the community in which we live and work. In recognition of this, we have publicly embraced that we are an Anchor Institution in Northwest Denver. We are working with the support of the Denver Foundation to help us further this important role. This academic year, we will conduct listening sessions with surrounding communities to identify opportunities to develop or enhance our relationship with our community.

Conclusion

I believe we have made enormous progress toward raising the stature of Regis University as an institution of higher education, and as a workplace. We have much work left to do, but we are:

- stronger financially;
- more focused on the quality of academics;
- becoming a more inclusive and equitable community;
- rewarding faculty and staff; and
- overall, strengthening our community.

I would again like to thank each and every one of you for your contributions to Regis University and I look forward to working with you this year on all of our important priorities.

Introduction of Next Speaker

I now turn to another great opportunity for us here at Regis this year. Along with the other 27 Jesuit universities in the United States, Regis will be reflecting on how we are living out our Jesuit, Catholic mission values through a process called the Institutional Mission Examen. Much like the personal reflection that Fr. Dunfee led for us, we will together reflect as a community on 6 what we are grateful for in our efforts so far and what aspirations we have to live out this mission more fully in the future.

Last year, three Jesuit universities, Xavier, John Carroll, and USF, served as the pilot schools helping to develop this process of internal listening conversations followed by a visit from colleagues from other Jesuit universities—and this year five more schools, including Regis will be in the second wave of these Institutional Examens.



I've asked that Regis participate in this process this year, because I am so proud of the many ways you all have contributed to our Jesuit mission. We begin these community conversations today over our lunch.

To explain this next step in our time together today, I would like to invite Dr. Shari Plantz-Master and Dr. Kari Kloos to the podium. They co-chair the planning team that has put together today's program, and they will share with us the next steps for our Institutional Examen and this afternoon's lunch conversations.