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Dr. Patricia Ladewig: A Career of Service and Inspiration to Others

An interview upon retirement as Provost of Regis University with
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Biography

PATRICIA A. LADEWIG received her BS in Nursing from the College of Saint Teresa in Winona, Minnesota; her MSN from Catholic University of America in Washington, DC; and her PhD in higher education administration from the University of Denver in Colorado. She served as an Air Force nurse and discovered her passion for teaching as a faculty member at Florida State University (FSU). In addition to teaching at FSU, she taught at the Catholic University of America, Pikes Peak Community College, and Loretto Heights College, where she earned tenure. When Loretto Heights closed in 1988, she found a home at Regis. She also became a women's health nurse practitioner and maintained a part-time clinical practice for many years.

In 1988, Dr. Ladewig became the first director of the nursing program at Regis College. In 1991,

when the college became Regis University, she became academic dean of the School for Health Care Professions, now known as the Rueckert-Hartman College for Health Professions (RHCHP). Under her guidance, the School of Nursing added an accelerated nursing program, master's programs, and a family nurse practitioner program. In addition, she established the School of Physical Therapy and the School of Pharmacy. From fewer than 100 students, RHCHP grew to over 3000 students. In 2009, Dr. Ladewig became Vice President for Academic Affairs, and in 2012 she became Provost at Regis University.

As Provost, she instituted the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) and established a business intelligence unit, now called the Office of Institutional Analytics and Research. She also fostered the growth of the Office of Academic Grants and secured increased funding for faculty research. Dr. Ladewig oversaw the restructuring of the 3 existing colleges (Regis College, the College for Professional Studies [CPS], and RHCHP) to allow for the creation of two new colleges — the College of Computer and Information Sciences and the College of Business and Economics — and the refocusing of CPS as the College of Contemporary Liberal Studies. All five college deans assumed their positions during her tenure.

Dr. Ladewig was active in the community, serving for eight years on the Craig Hospital Board including a term as Board Chair. In addition, she served for ten years on the St. Anthony Hospital Board including four years as Chair. Currently she is a member of the Community Health Value Committee of the Centura Board of Directors. Pat spent fifteen years as a public member to ABET (the accrediting board for engineering and technology), including six years each on two different commissions and three years on the ABET Board of Directors. In addition, she was a Higher Learning Commission accreditation visitor and team chair for many years and earlier in her career was active in many nursing organizations.

Stoeckel: Dr. Patricia Ladewig

She is a co-author of three major textbooks: *Maternal-Newborn Nursing & Women's Health*, now in its tenth edition, *Contemporary Maternal-Newborn Nursing*, eighth edition, and *Maternal-Child Nursing Care*, fifth edition.

In March 2016 she received her 35-year employee pin and a Lifetime Achievement Award from President John P. Fitzgibbons, S.J. On May 1st, at her last commencement ceremony as Mistress of

Ceremonies, Father Fitzgibbons named her Provost Emerita.

Pat and her husband, Tim, enjoy skiing, baseball games, and traveling. However, their greatest pleasure comes from their family: son Ryan, his wife Amanda, and grandchildren Reed and Addison Grace; and son Erik, his wife Kedri, and grandchildren Emma and Camden.

Interview

Q: Looking back, share the experience of moving from Loretto Heights to Regis 28 years ago.

The last year at Loretto Heights was marked by sadness and uncertainty as a college we loved closed its doors and many of our colleagues lost their positions. Sadly, this closing was a harbinger of the challenges many small liberal arts colleges are now facing. The Spring 1988 Commencement, our last, was especially poignant. And so the move to Regis from Loretto Heights that summer was both exciting and a little frightening — we simply didn't know what to expect. Regis did not have any clinically-based programs in health care, although the Health Information Management Program had relocated to Regis when Colorado Women's College closed. We worried needlessly. Father Clarke (then President), Father Sheeran (Vice President for Academic Affairs), and the entire Regis community could not have been more welcoming and supportive.

There were differences to be sure. Because Regis had been a men's school, bathroom facilities were something of an issue. Those of us who remember the early days still chuckle about the creative nursing faculty member who adorned the urinals with plastic flowers! Adding a program that was primarily female-based, both faculty and students, did have a positive impact on Regis in an unexpected way — hospitality became more important, rough edges became softer, and graciousness became valued. Our cultures began to merge.

At Regis we found a palpable sense of energy, one that challenged us to be entrepreneurial and creative — and our programs grew. In addition to the traditional BSN program and the RN to BSN weekend program, we began the state's first accelerated nursing program, far before other schools adopted the model. We offered onsite programs in Gillette, Wyoming and Colorado Springs. We started a master's program and online programs as well as nurse practitioner programs. The addition of programs in health care also added to Regis' stability because it further diversified the university's portfolio at a time when other institutions with a more limited array of offerings hit hard times.

Rueckert-Hartman College for Health Professions grew. In 2001, the Physical Therapy program was established and became the university's first doctoral program. The program is now nationally ranked as No. 28, quite a tribute to a school located in a university without a medical center. The School of Pharmacy, which accepted its first class in 2009, is only the second pharmacy program among the American Jesuit colleges and universities. Its innovative team-based learning curriculum is a model for many academic programs, both in pharmacy and in other fields.

What a journey. When I began at Regis we had fewer than one hundred students in nursing. When I moved to the position of Provost, Rueckert-Hartman College for Health Professions had over 3,000 students and a stellar reputation. Our roots lie in both Loretto Heights and in Regis — and we are blessed by that reality.

Q: What has been most meaningful to you about the experience of being a faculty member at Loretto Heights and an administrator at Regis, a Jesuit university?

It has been incredibly rewarding to work at two institutions that are so profoundly mission-based. Over and over with every accreditation, we have been told by the visiting accreditation teams how consistent Regis University's commitment to mission is — from the President to the newest person hired. I continue to be inspired by faculty and student service learning trips and their impact on communities in Ethiopia, Kenya, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Haiti, and Guatemala, to name a few. Our lives have been changed by these experiences, too, as we have been touched by the generosity, inspiration, and perseverance of poorer communities. As usual, we have learned more from them than they have learned from us. Community engagement with our local neighborhood has been increased through the new Cultivate Health project, our strongest neighborhood partnership yet.

I frankly have missed my role as a faculty member. When you serve in senior administrative positions, you focus on the long view and spend a good part of each day in meetings. I miss the thrill of seeing a student's mind work a problem, or that proverbial "aha experience" so often seen in the classroom. Also, it's faculty who know first-hand how learning is changing and our students are changing. As administrators we must be aware that we can quickly become out of touch with the student of the future. It's only in those face-to-face interactions that we can intuitively sense how our institutions are very different from the ones we graduated from.

Q: What are the challenges in preparing students for the future?

While higher education has several challenges in preparing students for the future, let me mention four that I view as especially significant.

First, it can be a challenge to help people understand the value of a strong liberal arts education regardless of the major a student chooses. In dealing with traditional-age students,

we often find that parents place such an emphasis on ensuring that their children can get a job when they graduate — as the joke goes, "so that they don't end up living in their parents' basement" — that they lose sight of the reality that their children will hold many jobs (some experts say ten or more) during their lives. Post-traditional students seeking to enhance a career or change careers may also be focused more on courses in the major because they perceive them as directly applicable to their goals without considering the foundation the liberal arts provide.

At a Jesuit liberal arts university like Regis, we recognize the importance of a liberal arts education in preparing graduates able to think critically and communicate effectively — graduates who are sensitive to cultural, economic, and societal issues, with an appreciation of the arts and sciences, and a hunger for lifelong learning. This is true whether a student is in a program in the arts and sciences or in a professional program. We have to embrace this challenge and find ever more effective ways of helping advance this message. We also know that the liberal arts are valued by the very organizations who hire our graduates. Most importantly, the liberal arts help a student make a more fulfilling life, not just a career.

Second, as educators we are called upon to respond to, and even anticipate, changing student and societal needs — different learning styles, the fast pace of technological change, jobs that don't yet exist, the high cost of education, the impact of a global environment, to name but a few. This requires us to be innovative and calls on us as educators to be visionary, creative, and responsive. This isn't always easy in a system that has existed for hundreds of years, but is essential if we are to make a difference.

Third, I believe that the mission inspires us to think about what it means to live with head *and* heart. The ethical and spiritual challenges of the future will require compassionate problem-solving about the increasing divide between rich and poor globally, the seeming decline of the language of "common good" in this country, and the economic pressures on the average American family. Jesuits have always called us to broaden

our world view, and never has there been a time in history when that was more urgent.

Fourth, I know that financial health of our institutions is on the mind of every provost. We have had our share of budget challenges at Regis and thankfully have more than survived the storms. In an era of fiscal tightening, I see a tremendous opportunity for Jesuit universities in the United States to find ways to collaborate. Our librarians for years have shared staff and resources; Regis has enjoyed its joint program in Occupational Therapy with Creighton. With the advance of quality online learning, there is no reason why more of us can't share courses, faculty, and programs. This may not only be a fiscal necessity, but also enhances the Jesuit brand so that we can start thinking not only of our individual institutions but "the Jesuit colleges and universities of the United States."

Q: What are some of the most significant decisions you have made as Provost?

Clearly, as Provost it has been my responsibility to support the President and lead efforts to implement the university's strategic plan. When I consider this question from a personal perspective, however, I believe that my most significant decisions have revolved around enhancing academic quality, supporting the faculty, and advancing student learning.

From the beginning it has been important to me to build bridges among the faculty. When I became Provost there were only two university committees on which faculty served: the Academic Policy and Planning Council (APPC) and the Institutional Review Board (IRB). I have worked to provide more opportunities for faculty to serve on university committees with their colleagues from the other colleges to ensure a greater faculty voice and to help break down silos between colleges. Shared governance efforts are moving forward.

I have also had the privilege of serving as a bridge between two presidencies, providing stability in important times of transition and different leadership styles and priorities.

To this end allow me list a few other efforts that I consider especially significant:

- Funding for faculty and student research through the University Research and Scholarship Committee (URSC) has been increased. This is helping us build a culture of scholarship. We're seeing new faculty members attracted to Regis because of the scholarship their colleagues are undertaking. Also, faculty are sharing their research with one another through publications such as this journal and through research and scholarship days. And most inspiring to me is the fact that so many of our faculty have invited students to be a part of their research. We're even seeing students attracted to Regis because of these opportunities.
- The Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) is established with a strong director to lead it. CETL has done important work in helping already excellent faculty hone and enhance their skills as teachers and scholars. It builds on the passion our faculty have always had for teaching, the love of student learning, and the opportunity to bring faculty together from across our colleges.
- I have had the privilege of hiring all five of the university's academic deans. The deans are a strong, creative group who help set the vision for Regis and who work together for the good of the university. Four of these deans have been promoted from within, which speaks to value we hold for the talent in our midst.
- A centralized data warehouse for reliable reporting and decision-making has been established. This unit, now the Office of Institutional Analytics and Research, has been a valuable resource in helping us move to a more evidence-based approach.
- The Office of Global Education has been launched with the Study Abroad program now a part of it. This move will provide opportunities for students from all five colleges to have more global opportunities. Additionally, we are building an infrastructure to expand our international student

population both online and at our main campus. This reflects the goal of our president that Regis must look more like the world in which we live.

- Our university plan for our next Higher Learning Commission comprehensive visit is well-developed and moving forward under a strong leader with faculty and administrators as colleagues to lead the five criterion teams. I am happy to say that assessment of student learning has been embraced by most of our faculty not only as a necessary component of accreditation but as an instrument for informing their teaching.
- Reflecting the movement of the majority of Jesuit universities in the U.S., the effort to change requirements for graduation from 128 SH to 120 SH is well underway and will be implemented this fall. We believe this will not only reduce the cost of a Regis undergraduate degree, but will help retention and the path to graduation — which is the fundamental Regis promise.
- Regis has played a significant role in the Jesuit Commons: Higher Education at the Margins. While I can't take credit for its creation, I am proud of the roles we have played in teaching refugees around the globe and staff who have borne the burden of complicated administrative responsibilities. I have considered it a privilege to serve on committees of this amazing project that I think will continue to grow worldwide.

Q: What advice would you give to the new Provost at a Jesuit university?

Because our next Provost knows Regis and is a seasoned leader, I don't need to give her advice about the importance of listening, getting to know people, and being straight with them. I do advise her to maintain traditions where they make sense and seek opportunities to develop new traditions that will be part of her legacy. I also encourage her to draw on the wonderful resources of the AJCU Chief Academic Officers group. They are an amazing source of advice and support. Finally, I encourage her to seek balance in her life. This can be an all-consuming job and it is important to

make time for family and friends, for down time, and for maintaining good health. It is an honor and a privilege to be Provost and I know she will be a great success.

Q: What will you miss most upon your retirement?

Without a doubt — the people. Regis is a wonderful community blessed by faculty and staff who embrace our mission and values. After all these years I know so many people, if not by name, by sight. I love walking across campus seeing and greeting people, knowing that together we are making a difference. In challenging times we have stood together for the benefit of a university that is bigger than our own departments.

And then there are our students. What an amazing group! They are bright, talented, committed to others, and ready to be leaders in service of others. I love visiting with them, learning their stories, knowing they will help make a good world better.

Q: What are your plans for the future?

I am taking the summer off to relax and spend time with my family and friends. People have told me to take six months before getting actively involved in things, and I plan to follow that advice. Also, I co-author three textbooks, and now I will be able to work on them during the day rather than at night and on weekends. In the fall my husband and I will do some traveling. He isn't retiring yet, which is probably good. I look forward to continued friendships with Regis University colleagues I have known for many years. Regis truly has been a home to me.

Oh, and need I mention — there is always baseball! 