October 10, 2012

TO: SLU Trustees, Faculty, Staff and Students
FROM: Lawrence Biondi, S.J., President

It is hard to believe that September is already over, and we are just days away from Fall Break. (Students, good luck on your midterm exams.)

The beginning of the 2012-2013 academic year has not been without its challenges, including the areas of communication and collaboration between the administration and the faculty, which I will discuss later in this message.

However, I think it is very important to remember all of the positive things happening at Saint Louis University right now.

We have once again enrolled a large and academically gifted freshman class, drawing new students from across the country and from around the globe. Just as exciting, we retained last year’s freshmen at a record level.

Our undergraduate business and engineering programs rose dramatically in recent U.S. News & World Report rankings. We also earned praise from the peer evaluators who visited SLU last spring as part of our reaccreditation effort.

Construction is under way on the state-of-the-art Joe and Loretta Scott Law Center in Downtown St. Louis. (To view a virtual tour of the stunning new facility, click here.) Additionally, major renovation work at the former West Pine Gym for the Center for Global Citizenship project remains on target for completion in 2013.

Finally, we recently announced the formation of the College for Public Health and Social Work, which brings our nationally ranked Schools of Public Health and Social Work together. The result of extensive collaboration, this reorganization creates an even stronger academic unit and will have major benefits for current and future students, as well as the communities that we serve.

With these many positive developments in mind, below are some University updates.
COMMUNICATION AND COLLABORATION: By now, you may have read in the media about the concerns of the Faculty Senate over draft policy proposals that led to a vote of no confidence in the Academic Vice President. I would like to take a few moments to share the facts about this issue and to let you know where, from my perspective, the matter stands.

As part of the development of the University’s new strategic plan – which seeks to position SLU as one of the nation’s top-50 national universities – Dr. Manoj Patankar asked the Executive Committee of the Faculty Senate to facilitate feedback from the faculty on four draft polices: Definition of Terms, Faculty Workload, Faculty Evaluation and Faculty Recognition. When these proposals were disseminated, they were positioned by the leadership of the Faculty Senate as an attack on tenure and elicited negative reactions from some faculty.

Given the faculty’s concerns, I convened a joint meeting of the Executive Committee of the Faculty Senate, the Academic Deans and the Vice Presidents to discuss the draft policy proposals. The meeting was held in the spirit of shared governance, and there was open and frank discussion that included Dr. Patankar’s suggestion that the policies could be withdrawn. The assembled leadership voted in support of his suggestion, and the policies were withdrawn.

At that same meeting, all of the attendees agreed to sign – and ultimately did sign – a joint statement expressing our continued commitment to tenure at SLU and a willingness to move forward collaboratively. We also agreed to form a Blue Ribbon Committee to develop the necessary processes and criteria to achieve the objectives of the strategic plan.

At its September 22 meeting, the University’s Board of Trustees affirmed its support of our strategic plan and its confidence in the administration to lead the planning process to implement the plan successfully. The Trustees also endorsed the Blue Ribbon Committee.

Despite the withdrawal of the proposed policies and the unanimous agreement of the leadership of the Faculty Senate on proceeding forward, the Faculty Senate voted no confidence in Dr. Patankar during its September 25 meeting.

In response to the letter informing me of the vote, I wrote to the Faculty Senate on October 2 that Dr. Patankar has my full support and that I will not be making a leadership change in the academic administration. Furthermore, I challenged the Senate’s underlying assumptions that led to its vote. To read my detailed response to the Faculty Senate, click here.

In my letter to the Faculty Senate, I urged the Senators to use their influence for the greater good of the University, especially for the students and patients we serve. We have much to accomplish to reach our shared goals of becoming a top-50 American university and fulfilling the vision to become the finest Catholic university in the United States. It is my hope that we can work toward these goals together.
BOARD OF TRUSTEES: On September 22, Thomas H. Brouster, Sr., was elected chairman of our Board of Trustees. Tom became a trustee in 2001, and he has gained vast experience in leadership positions for the Board during the past 11 years. In particular, as one of the region’s most successful and respected banking executives, Tom’s leadership as the chairman of the Board’s finance committee has been critical to SLU remaining on solid financial footing during these difficult economic times.

We also have confirmed the membership of three new trustees who were nominated to join the Board at its May 2012 meeting. Joseph P. Conran and Thomas Q. Keefe are alumni of our School of Law and two of the region’s leading attorneys. Richard T. Fisher is a top business executive who has helped run major manufacturing companies and investment banking firms. In addition to their substantial professional experience, the three new trustees are noted civic leaders who have served our local community extensively.

DEAN SEARCH: A committee has been formed to begin the national search for the Dean of the School of Law. Law Professors Tonie FitzGibbon and Tim Greaney are co-chairing the group, which includes the following members:

- Jason Finkes, Third-Year Law Student
- Justin Hansford, Assistant Professor of Law
- Sam Jordan, Associate Professor of Law
- Kerrin Kowach, Assistant Professor of Legal Writing
- Cliff Martin, Second-Year Law Student
- Marcia McCormick, Associate Professor of Law
- Mary Pat McInnis, Assistant Dean of the School of Law
- Christopher Pinne, S.J., Chaplain to the School of Law
- Brendan Roediger, Assistant Clinical Professor of Law

Up to three Law alumni also will be named to the committee, which will begin the search in earnest later this fall. I wish the committee well as it embarks on this important effort. As reported previously, current Dean Thomas Q. Keefe has agreed to serve for this academic year, and I thank him again for his commitment.

HLC ACCREDITATION: I am pleased to share the news that the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools recently notified us that our institutional accreditation has been continued, with our next comprehensive evaluation to occur in 2021-2022.

More than 400 students, faculty, staff, administrators and trustees interacted with the visiting HLC team, in individual or group meetings, as well as during open fora. These conversations provided the team with evidence that the University’s self-study report was thorough and accurate. Further, they found the SLU community to be knowledgeable about the self-study process, familiar with HLC’s accreditation principles and aware of the strengths and challenges identified in the self-study.
Chief among the numerous strengths identified by the HLC team’s report were:

- SLU’s mission statement is clear, pervades the institution, and is appropriately integrated into the undergraduate curriculum.
- The University clearly seeks to embrace diversity. SLU strives to expand its reach globally and to envelop a more geographically and culturally diverse student body and faculty.
- Governance and administrative structures are organized to further the University’s mission through effective leadership and collaborative processes.
- The work of the St. Louis and Madrid campuses is closely coordinated.
- SLU has well-developed student, faculty and staff manuals.
- The current strategic planning process is systematic and involves all units of the institution.
- The Faculty Senate has an active and appropriate role in University governance.
- SLU’s local and national reputation is very good, and both the Board of Trustees and the President work to maintain it; the Board is forward-thinking and supportive of the President.
- The President has been a major change agent for both the University and the City of St. Louis.
- The University is financially secure and entrepreneurial, and has an adequate resource base.
- SLU exercises effective risk management regarding its relationship with Saint Louis University Hospital.
- Changes in the Office of Institutional Research (OIR) will strengthen the University’s evaluation and institutional research efforts and contribute to more informed academic and enrollment management decision making.
- SLU is committed to assessment of holistic student learning, retention and success.
- New program protocols for the Undergraduate and Graduate Academic Affairs Committees (UAAC and GAAC) require the identification of student learning outcomes and assessment plans.
- Curricular programs in the Division of Student Development incorporate student learning outcomes and assessment.
- SLU offers first-year students a comprehensive approach to learning through learning communities, first-year interest groups and U101.
- All annual faculty reviews include some measure of teaching effectiveness.
- Significant funds are provided for faculty development, including multiple types of professional and educational faculty leave.
- The Reinert Center for Transformative Teaching and Learning is uniformly praised by both faculty and administrators.
- Distance education courses are held to the same standards as on-ground courses.
- SLU’s 1818 Advanced College Credit Program is a national leader.
- Efforts are made to improve support services for the increased number of undergraduate students from China.
- Steps have been taken to increase research productivity and administration, including the reorganization of the Office of Research Services and improved
incentivization of faculty to seek external funding and launch new research initiatives.

- The annual Senior Legacy Symposium is an impressive display of undergraduate student research.
- Work is under way to develop University-wide undergraduate student learning outcomes within a revision of the framework of “The Five Dimensions of the SLU Experience.”
- The University’s commitment to lifelong learning is supported through its tuition remission program for faculty and staff.
- SLU generally has a robust service ethic; the establishment of the Center for Service and Community Engagement contributes to increased student community engagement through volunteerism and service-learning.
- The University has demonstrated responsiveness to community needs, and there is ample evidence that the community, in turn, values the services SLU provides.
- SLU’s commitment to social justice is extremely strong.
- The University has been a major force for the redevelopment of its city neighborhood.

In addition to this extensive praise, the HLC evaluators identified the assessment of student learning outcomes as a significant challenge for the University. Specifically, the team reported that:

- Current assessment and evaluation efforts are not comprehensive, well-documented or coordinated at the University level.
- Few programs publish student learning outcomes or share that information or assessment results.
- There are no clearly identified student learning outcomes or assessment of student outcomes at the institutional level for undergraduate or graduate students.
- There is minimal documentation evidencing how assessment results are used to improve student learning.

To help SLU address these challenges, the HLC is requiring a “progress report on assessment of student learning,” due August 31, 2016, that verifies the adoption of the following practices:

- Publication of measurable student learning outcomes for every degree program and major.
- Creation of a centralized electronic “accreditation and assessment” file of documents related to evaluation, program review, program accreditation self-studies and reports, and assessment of student academic achievement.
- Documentation in the aforementioned electronic file that assessment of student academic achievement reflects data acquired through both direct and indirect means of assessment.

Based on the entirety of its observations, the HLC team also offered non-binding suggestions for institutional improvement regarding diversity, distance education and
technology, and campus climate. To read entire report, as well as the organization’s formal notification letter, visit the accreditation website.

It is important to note that more than 100 members of our SLU community directly worked on the accreditation process, including drafting our self-study report. I would like to thank everyone who participated, especially Miriam Joseph, Research and Instruction Librarian/Professor, and Steve Sanchez, Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs, who led the effort.

UNIVERSITY HOLIDAYS EXTENDED: Recently, the Staff Advisory Committee submitted a recommendation to the Vice President for Human Resources to give staff two additional paid holidays during this year’s Christmas break. The proposal was brought forward to the Executive Staff, which unanimously approved the idea.

Thus, Thursday and Friday, December 27 and 28, have been added to the official University holiday schedule for 2012, giving staff nine consecutive days off during the Christmas break (December 24 – January 1). I hope our hard-working staff will enjoy this extra time with family and friends.

Please note that SLUCare follows a different holiday schedule than the University and will be open December 27 and 28. However, this change will allow employees of the University Medical Group (UMG) to bank two additional holidays for future use without impacting their available vacation time.

ENROLLMENT: The Fall 2012 Census has been completed. Our current total enrollment is 13,981 students, down 0.7 percent from last year. Undergraduate enrollment rose 1.6 percent to an all-time high of 8,806 students, while graduate and professional enrollments declined 5 percent to 5,175 students.

As I stated in my August message, we have been aware for some time that external forces, including the lingering recession and the diminishing number of high school graduates, will continue to impact our ability to enroll new students.

As expected, the overall number of new students we enrolled this fall is down. This year, we welcomed 1,618 U.S. and international first-time freshmen, down 5.5 percent from last year. Enrollments for transfer and English as Second Language (ESL) students rose slightly. At the graduate and professional level, we enrolled 1,365 students, down 12.6 percent from last year.

Although our enrollment numbers have declined somewhat, our predictive and prudent budgeting has ensured that we will meet our financial goals for this fiscal year. Moreover, we are engaging in a number of enhanced strategies and activities to recruit new students for Fall 2013, including expanding into new U.S. markets and exploring new international partnerships.

Additionally, Jay Goff, Vice President for Enrollment and Retention Management, is working to form two councils that will explore ways to enhance our recruitment and
Academically, our newest Billikens boast a mean high school GPA of 3.78, while their average ACT score is 27.2 (the upper 12 percent in the nation). This year, we enrolled 195 Honors students and have provided nearly 700 academic merit scholarships.

This year’s freshman class also is geographically diverse. Only 28 percent of our new students hail from Missouri; the remaining 72 percent represent 42 states/provinces and 53 foreign countries.

Finally, our retention rate for first-time freshmen has reached a record level this year. This fall, 88 percent of last year’s freshman class has returned, the highest percentage since Fall 2003. This puts us ever closer to our strategic goal of a 90-percent retention rate, which can assist in improving our overall national rankings.

The fact that we continue to attract and retain so many gifted students from across the country and from around the world speaks to SLU’s increasing reputation for academic excellence.

While I am proud that we continue to enroll a bright and diverse group of students, I am equally proud that we also continue to educate deserving students, regardless of their ability to pay.

This fall, approximately 1,800 of our undergraduates — or 20 percent — are participating in the federal Pell Grant program, which provides need-based assistance to low-income students. Our percentage is higher than at some competing four-year public and flagship institutions, which traditionally serve a greater percentage of low-income students than private colleges and universities. This is significant because it demonstrates our mission-driven commitment to providing access to students regardless of their economic status.

ENSURING STUDENT SUCCESS: Once we have enrolled students, we need to do everything we can to help them succeed. Among our most effective initiatives are our Student Success Centers, which provide one-stop shopping for student support services, including tutoring, academic advising, career services and more.

The Division of Student Development opened the first Student Success Center in Busch Student Center five years ago. In 2009, the Division opened a second center in the School of Nursing Building.

These centers have certainly lived up to their name. The number of students accessing writing, tutoring and supplemental instruction through the Student Success Centers has continued to increase significantly each year since they opened. During the 2011-2012 academic year, the Centers provided more than 9,800 tutoring and supplemental instruction sessions and more than 3,700 writing consultations.
Data suggest that students who participate in academic support programs provided by the Student Success Centers are more successful in their courses. For example, a recent survey of students found that those who participate in three or more tutoring sessions per semester are much more likely to understand the challenges they are facing in the classroom (89 percent), gain confidence in their abilities (83 percent) and get better grades (77 percent).

Student Development also has sought to streamline the process for scheduling academic support appointments, launching a new online system that 73 percent of students report they now use to set up meetings with advisors, tutors, writing consultants and career development specialists.

The division also uses a software tool called MAPWorks, which helps identify students who are potentially “at risk” academically during their first semester, enabling faculty and staff to intervene and provide necessary support.

The student support services we provide, along with the many outstanding extra-curricular opportunities we offer, not only contribute immensely to our recruitment and retention efforts, they also play an essential role in helping us fulfill our Jesuit mission to educate the whole person.

**EMBRACING DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION:** SLU welcomes all people, regardless of race, ethnicity, sex, age, ability, faith, orientation, gender, class or ideology. During the past several years, we have engaged in a number of new activities to strengthen our commitment to diversity and inclusion. These initiatives have come together through significant collaboration by multiple divisions at SLU, including Academic Affairs, Enrollment and Retention Management, Mission and Ministry, and Student Development. I would like to spotlight just two of our more recent efforts.

The Safe Zone program seeks to foster a more inclusive environment in which members of SLU’s lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) community are treated with dignity and respect. The program was fully launched in January 2012 with input and support from a number of campus stakeholders. It is similar to programs at other Jesuit institutions, including Georgetown, Boston College, Loyola Chicago and Santa Clara.

During the Spring 2012 semester, 149 members of the SLU community — from undergraduates to vice presidents — completed the necessary training to become Safe Zone Allies. Upon successful completion of the program, participants receive a placard to hang in their work or living areas to show those who are LGBTQ that the space is a “Safe Zone” for them.

Safe Zone training dates in October and November are still available. To learn more about becoming an ally to our LGBTQ students, faculty and staff, contact Myrinda Grantham in the Cross Cultural Center at 314-977-2119 ormgranth2@slu.edu.

Now in its second year, the African American Male Scholars (AAMS) initiative provides mentorship and support to African-American male students to help ensure their retention
and graduation. Among students who enrolled in the program last year, those who actively engaged with their mentors and regularly participated in programs achieved higher grade point averages than enrollees who did not. The program’s successful pilot year concluded last spring with a symposium focused on African-American male student success that drew attendees from as far away as Connecticut.

In addition to diversity efforts being led by various divisions and departments at SLU, I would also like to acknowledge our student leaders for addressing these very important issues. For example, the Student Government Association has established the Diversity Leadership Cabinet, which serves as the student voice for diversity and social justice issues. And the student-drafted Oath of Inclusion sets forth the expectation that all students will work to promote inclusion while at SLU.

To learn more about diversity efforts at SLU, visit www.slu.edu/diversity.xml.

OUTREACH TO VETERANS: The national publication G.I. Jobs has named SLU a “Military Friendly School” for the fourth consecutive year. Designating SLU as an “elite” educational institution, the magazine ranked SLU among the top 15 percent of colleges, universities and trade schools nationwide that support men and women in uniform.

At SLU, we have 269 students who are affiliated with the Armed Forces as veterans, active-duty members, reservists or their dependents. Twenty-six of these students are participating in the Health Professions Scholarship Program, which provides tuition reimbursement from the government for those who commit to serve for four years in the military after graduation.

Among our efforts to support our military-related students, SLU participates in the Yellow Ribbon Program, which awards 50 eligible veterans a maximum of $10,000 for tuition and University charges. We also are a member of the Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges (SOC) Consortium.

Last year, SLU began offering a degree in the online Aviation Management program at a reduced tuition rate for benefit-eligible military students, veterans and their dependents. This innovative program is taught through a partnership between the School of Professional Studies and Parks College of Engineering, Aviation and Technology.

To expand our recruitment of active-duty and veteran students, we have hired Michael Bamber, a retired U.S. Army Lieutenant Colonel, to serve as the Program Director for Military Programs in the Office of Enrollment Outreach and Territory Development.

As their numbers have grown, our military students have come together to form a SLU chapter of the Student Veterans Association. The group, provisionally approved by the SGA last spring, is expected to receive chartered status by the end of this semester.

Serving those who have served their country in the military has become an increasing focus for Saint Louis University, and I am proud that SLU has been recognized for this effort.
INDIRECT COST RECOVERIES FOR RESEARCH: Indirect cost recovery (IDCR) funds are monies received by SLU to reimburse administrative and facilities-related costs that support research grants and contracts. Generated by the grants and contracts awarded to our scholars and researchers, IDCR funds provide vital support for our research enterprise.

The Division of Research Administration recently completed a two-year study of SLU’s IDCR program, surveying numerous investigators, department chairs, deans and administrators. Responses were supportive of the program and identified numerous ways in which IDCR funds enhance our research operations.

Moreover, the study found that faculty participation in research increased by 44 percent since the inception of the program — from 176 faculty members who qualified for IDCR distributions in July 2010, to 254 who qualified in July 2012.

Of course, everyone would like IDCR funding levels to increase, and they will as we increase the size and scope of our research operations. The IDCR program, along with efforts such as the President’s Research Fund, provide critical support for growth of our research enterprise and demonstrate the University’s commitment to discovery, which is a crucial part of a SLU education.

SUSTAINABILITY: October 24 is National Sustainability Day. As we mark the occasion, I think it is important that we reflect on sustainability as a Jesuit value and how we can work together to make our campuses, and our world, more sustainable.

In 2008, the Society of Jesus celebrated the General Congregation 35. The Congregation explored a number of issues, including sustainability. The Society noted that “care of the environment affects the quality of our relationships with God, with other human beings, and with creation itself. It touches the core of our faith in and love for God.”

Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.J., Superior General Emeritus of the Society of Jesus, also challenged all “Jesuits and those who share our mission to show ever more effective ecological solidarity in our spiritual, communal and apostolic lives.”

It is within this Jesuit context that Saint Louis University has put an increasing focus on campus sustainability. I am proud to report that SLU has made progress on number of initiatives that can lessen our environmental footprint, including waste reduction, recycling, energy efficiency and sustainable business practices, among other efforts.

To help coordinate activities and prioritize initiatives, the University is forming a sustainability advisory group that will be co-chaired by Kathleen Brady, Vice President for Facilities Services and Chief Sustainability Officer, and Diana Carlin, Associate Vice President for Graduate Education and Interim Executive Director of the Center for Sustainability.

As you may recall, last year, the University received a bronze rating from the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE). While we may be
known for “SLU blue,” we also want to be known for our commitment to being green. To learn more about the University’s sustainability efforts, click here.

MAKE A DIFFERENCE DAY: This annual tradition brings out thousands of SLU volunteers and is a true point of pride for our University. This year’s Make a Difference Day will be held Saturday, October 27. The non-profits, schools and other organizations we have served in the past have indicated that they need more help than ever. That is why our Center for Service and Community Engagement has put out a call for 3,700 volunteers, which is approximately 700 more volunteers than last year’s record turnout. Given this, I strongly encourage you to sign up to ensure that we meet the community’s needs. Visit the Center’s website for more information. By spending just a few hours volunteering, you truly can make a difference.

SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINES: There are more than 200 accounts on Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr and other social media affiliated with SLU departments, colleges, programs and organizations. To help manage this major online presence, the Office of the General Counsel and the Office of Marketing and Communications have developed social media guidelines in collaboration with several administrative departments and the Faculty Senate.

These guidelines were established not only to protect the University, but everyone who posts to social media on behalf of SLU. It is important to remember that the University’s real-world policies, standards of behavior and professional expectations apply to online interactions. Administrators of social media accounts are also expected to respect copyright laws at all times. Finally, if you are looking to establish an official social media account for your area, it must be approved by your vice president or dean. You should also notify Marcom before proceeding.

Later this month, representatives from the General Counsel’s Office and Marcom will host a special meeting to go over the new guidelines and to talk about crisis communication as it relates to social media. The session will be held 9:30 to 11 a.m. Tuesday, October 16, in the Sinquefield Stateroom of DuBourg Hall.

DID YOU KNOW?: Our 2012 Homecoming and Family Weekend — held September 28-30 — was a major success once again thanks to the dedicated efforts of many individuals, especially in Alumni Relations and Student Development. My thanks to everyone who helped organize the weekend as well as everyone who volunteered to staff various events.

As you might imagine, Homecoming and Family Weekend requires a tremendous amount of hard work. But did you know that it also takes thousands of cups of South St. Louis frozen custard?

Below are some impressive figures from the past five years.

- Number of alumni who have attended: 10,300 alumni (and their families)
- Number of parents who have participated: 5,650
- Number of volunteers who have assisted: 583
• Number of cups of Ted Drewes that have been handed out: 8,500
• Number of campus tram tours given: 114
• Number of cookies served at Billiken tailgates: 15,250
• Number of firework shells shot during halftime of the men’s soccer games: 12,168

FEAST OF ALL SOULS: November 2 is the Feast of All Souls. While it may not receive as much attention as Halloween or even All Saints Day, this day is very important among Catholics around the world, and has always been special to the Jesuit Order. On this day, we remember and pray for loved ones who have died during the past year. Here at SLU, we will celebrate a Memorial Mass on Friday, November 2, in St. Francis Xavier College Church. All members of the SLU community — regardless of their faith traditions — are invited to attend.

IN CONCLUSION: As we seek to move forward together to advance our University and to work in the best interests of our students, I would like to end my message with words that were written on the wall of Mother Teresa’s home for children in Calcutta, India.

“People are often unreasonable and self-centered. Forgive them anyway. If you are kind, people may accuse you of ulterior motives. Be kind anyway. If you are honest, people may cheat you. Be honest anyway. If you find happiness, people may be jealous. Be happy anyway. The good you do today may be forgotten tomorrow. Do good anyway. Give the world the best you have, and it may never be enough. Give your best anyway. For you see, in the end, it is between you and God. It was never between you and them anyway.”

Widely attributed to Mother Teresa, these verses express her spirit and the way in which the Missionaries of Charity live their lives. I think they are words we can all try to live by.

May God continue to bless you all.