February 20, 2017

Dear Colleagues,

In the Fall I gave a State of Academic Affairs address during which I provided my assessment of where Saint Louis University is educationally, operationally, and financially. My remarks (full text may be found here) described some of the impressive progress we have made in recent years in enhancing the success of our students and celebrated our scholarly achievements. I also issued a challenge in the address – one that bears repeating here:

*What we need to do is better -- and more tightly -- define who we are institutionally, intellectually, and programmatically. We need to do so recognizing that the choice that students and faculty scholars have in choosing where to work and study actually liberates SLU to own and live a distinctive articulation of our mission, to be a distinctive University community.*

Over the next three months, I will share with the University community three communications, each providing a framework for how, going forward, we might further define and further distinguish ourselves through this articulation of our mission:

- **In March I will address the SLU undergraduate experience.** SLU provides and must continue to provide excellent disciplinary and professional preparation. It can be even more distinctive by enhancing our commitment to education as an integrative experience with a commitment to inquiry that fosters in students a well-developed mind, a generous heart, a reflective soul, and a commitment to a life of active learning in a global community.

- **In April I will address graduate education at SLU.** There are significant opportunities to expand SLU’s impact at the graduate level, particularly in programs for professionals seeking advancement across the corporate, industrial, government, and not-for-profit sectors. We have some very successful programs that should be expanded, as well as opportunities to build new ones, especially in those areas where deep partnerships with local industry can assist us in achieving these goals.

- **In May I will address our growing commitment to research, scholarship, and creative work across SLU’s disciplines, colleges, schools, and centers.** We are strengthening our infrastructure to support faculty research. Like our academic programs, our research is an essential way in which we live our institutional mission. We strive to deepen our impact in on the world in ways that create a more just world and to ask questions of fundamental – even eternal – significance.

Higher purpose. Greater good.
As I share my hopes for the academic community at SLU in the coming months, I encourage you to do the same with me and all our SLU colleagues. Our ideas will evolve and improve through dialogue of what our future will be.

In May I will host an open forum where we can share ideas and the steps needed to make our aspirations, and those of our students, a reality.

I recognize the difficulty in thinking about new ideas for enhancing the SLU community at a time that we are also eliminating staff and faculty positions – positions currently filled by people we love and respect. Our mission continues. It is precisely in these times we are called to be faithful to that mission.

Respectfully,

Nancy Brickhouse, Ph.D.
Provst
March 28, 2017

Dear Colleagues,

Last month I foreshadowed a series of communications via which I would share the framework to guide SLU’s academic enterprise in the coming years. This is the first in that series, focused on a renewed commitment to undergraduate education.

Over the past 18 months I have written and said a great deal about the importance of delivering an undergraduate education distinctive in its expression of SLU’s Jesuit heritage. Our institutional hallmarks must be much more than just “distinguishing features”; they must be pronounced curricular and co-curricular charisms, sustained and integrated throughout all four years, for all students, and in all majors.

All SLU undergraduates must be engaged in the great questions of the day – and those that have consumed intellectual inquiry throughout history. The core of a SLU education must be rooted in the integrated study of the arts, humanities, social sciences, and the natural sciences. It’s true that SLU’s commitment to professional education and the development of our majors has never been greater. But the ultimate goal of our undergraduate experience is to educate whole persons, whose careers are just one expression of their full human identity, vocation, and value. We are called to prepare students not just as professionals, but also as community members, citizens, spouses, and parents.

With a new Vision for the SLU Baccalaureate now established, and revised undergraduate learning outcomes under development, SLU is primed for significant curriculum revision – supported by sound curriculum management practices across all units – that will advance the quality and integrated character of our undergraduate programs.

In the spirit of shared governance, the most detailed work toward that end belongs to the broader community, led by the faculty. But I offer below some goals and principles, informed by the context shared above, that can help shepherd that work.

As a University community, we will:

• Establish a University-wide core curriculum intentionally designed and implemented to foster student achievement of the next iteration of our University-Wide Undergraduate Student Learning Outcomes. Whether college-level core curricula should complement such a University-wide core also needs to be determined.

• Increase the number of full-time faculty teaching undergraduate students, including at the 1000- and 2000-levels. Nowhere is the expertise of our most experienced and most recognized faculty more needed to introduce students to new scholarly worlds and the diversity of our academic majors. We must advance the teacher/scholar model, and embody for our students the integral role of such scholarship in the pursuit of truth and advancement of learning.

• Leverage our Madrid campus, our study abroad partners, our INTO programs, and our curricula overall to better prepare SLU graduates to live in, and serve others throughout, a global community. Likewise, we must capitalize on the opportunities provided by our
Midtown location and our Madrid campus to learn from and serve those living and working all around us, and in ways that respect their diversity and their humanity. And we must help our online students engage with and learn in their communities.

- Revise our programs so that students have the time/curricular space for developmentally-appropriate intellectual exploration, and the flexibility needed to accommodate reasonably-timed changes in majors. All students should be able to change their majors and colleges and still have a path to graduation in four years.

- Strengthen the quality of academic advising, and better coordinate it with career advising and other forms of mentoring; these should be aligned and streamlined to better meet student needs.

- Increase our investment in the success of low-income, first generation, and other underrepresented students. Everyone we admit to SLU has the potential to succeed; it’s our job to ensure that our institutional environment and support programs facilitate that success.

- Increase the number of internships and other experiential learning opportunities in which students participate. Research indicates that integrative educational engagement results in greater and more demonstrable educational impact.

The goals and principles offered above do not fully comprise our academic plans; but they do represent key directions we must pursue, and the commitments we must make, if we are to live our claims for excellence in undergraduate education. I am also committed to working with you to review the organizations and structures governing faculty work to break down barriers to integration and collaboration.

I look forward to discussing with you the plans laid out in this letter, and in the forthcoming letters on graduate education, research, and faculty affairs. In Fall 2017 I will hold meetings in each of the colleges and schools to discuss academic planning and the faculty’s key role in both establishing and meeting our shared goals. In the meantime, please contact me with questions or ideas.

Respectfully,

Nancy Brickhouse, Ph.D.
Provost
Dear Colleagues,

Last month I shared some goals and principles to guide SLU’s academic planning efforts for undergraduate education in the coming years. Today I focus on graduate education – a key element in our “Academic Reinvention” efforts.

The need for our academic programs to be expressions of SLU’s Jesuit educational heritage is just as great at the graduate level as at the undergraduate level. But at the graduate level our Jesuit identity ought to manifest in how we educate leaders – leaders in research and in practice. Most importantly, in the Jesuit tradition we develop principled leaders whose accomplishments strengthen our communities. All of our graduate programs must ground their disciplinary and professional training in the context of the greater good that leaders have the responsibility for fostering. SLU graduates should be distinguished by their ability to discern the ethical and moral implications of their work, and by their courage to lead for justice – particularly in addressing the social, economic, and cultural issues that challenge St. Louis and urban environments more generally.

Graduate education has greatly influenced the scope of SLU’s current academic portfolio. That portfolio must respect its Jesuit lineage, but also remain forward-looking. It must be sensitive to evolving student needs and markets; SLU’s educational impact is most demonstrable via the impact of SLU graduates on their professions and their communities. And we are obligated to modify our portfolio of programs to attract a diverse population of students and remain in sync with the reality of students’ employment prospects.

To advance this agenda, we will:

• Extend existing partnerships, and develop new partnerships, with other educational and research institutions, corporations, government entities, the legal community, or other “communities of innovation.” We must partner – in research and in practice, in St. Louis and in Madrid – with the leaders of today to develop the principled, Jesuit-educated leaders of tomorrow.

• Develop strong incentives – primarily to faculty, but also to academic leaders – to create new programs or grow existing ones; this will be a key consideration in the development of revised budget processes. We also need to build new programs in areas where strong partnerships with local organizations can assist us – and where our faculty and student expertise can assist them. Recent efforts toward this end include the expansion of our Physician’s Assistant and Communication Sciences and Disorders programs; a new M.S. in Computer Science program is also under development. We must also support units in

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developing partnerships that meet the clinical education demands in many of our professional graduate programs.

• Review our organizations and policies with the goal of strengthening accountability and the ways in which we invest our resources.

• Expand executive education programs and non-credit professional education across academic units to bolster our development of leaders already serving the St. Louis region (and beyond).

• Leverage SLU faculty expertise, as well as scholarly resources (such as the new NMR equipment, and the nearby Jesuit Archives) to make SLU a hub for advanced teaching, research, and innovation.

• Increase the quantity, quality, and demonstrable impact of faculty research and scholarship – and include students in that work; the mentorship we provide to our graduate students must be authentic, and provide opportunities for SLU students to practice what we teach. All of this will bring increased recognition to SLU – to both our graduate programs themselves and the institution as a whole. The greater impact SLU has on the scholarly community, and on the communities of practice, the greater respect SLU will gain nationally and internationally. The benefits of that respect are innumerable, not the least of which is broad recognition of the faculty’s excellence and the value of a SLU graduate degree.

My next letter will be focused on SLU as research institution, and our new plan for research. In the meantime, I welcome your questions and ideas about strengthening and expanding graduate education at SLU.

Respectfully,

Nancy Brickhouse, Ph.D.
Provost
April 17, 2017

Dear Colleagues,

In my past two letters, I have spoken about how our academic mission impacts teaching and mentoring for undergraduate and graduate students. Today I write to talk about our mission as a research university.

Saint Louis University stands among the great Jesuit research universities that have created new knowledge through scientific and scholarly study and put that into practice in the classroom and community. Research, teaching, and service is at the core of our work as faculty. Research forms the foundation for that work and gives us an opportunity to use discovery to advance impactful teaching and service. Moreover, our prospective students – both at the undergraduate and graduate level – want opportunities for research experiences with faculty. Given access to the right tools and mentorship, they will develop new compounds and materials, craft new directions in policy, launch new companies, and discover new insights in ancient texts.

More than half of our faculty are engaged in research that improves human health. As we train doctors and other health practitioners, pursue cures, and treat patients, our work must be informed by our discoveries. We need to build on our partnership, for example with the SSM’s hospital network and our collaborations with the Veterans Affairs Administration. We should seek to be a leader in research-informed clinical practice and this means that we need to invest in both basic and translational research facilities.

Over the past year, our new Vice President for Research has transformed the office, seeking to make it a partner with you as you launch your ideas and find funding. We are now poised to fully embrace our role as a great Jesuit research university. To achieve that goal, we will:

- Increase the number of faculty with external research funding and double the dollar value of our research enterprise. Many of our faculty have achieved a national reputation through outstanding scholarship without external support, yet we also know that external financial support enables us to attract and support graduate students, pursue larger and more impactful studies, develop collaborations with colleagues around the world, and travel to present findings to those who would most benefit from them. We will provide internal support, such as the recently launched Career Award and R-series challenges to help faculty improve their success rates. And we will increase the types, variety, and frequency of seed funding opportunities so that faculty have opportunities to aggressively pursue their best ideas.

- Identify and prioritize areas where we can pursue our mission as well as be distinctive and eminent. We need to make meaningful investments in areas
where we have strengths and broad faculty interest. This year, faculty groups have been meeting to explore collaborative research opportunities, including urban scholarship and practice; water, food, and security; supporting humanistic scholarship; health and bioinformatics; computation and data science; and systems biology. The Office of the Vice President for Research will continue to look for groups of faculty who want to pursue large-scale opportunities that require resources beyond those of a single department or school.

- Create more opportunities for students to work with our distinguished faculty at every level. The faculty in each school will be challenged to create opportunities for every undergraduate to develop deep knowledge of a field through research, scholarship, performance, and practice. We will seek to increase the quality and number of publications from our graduate students through collaboration with and mentorship by the faculty.

- Seek philanthropic support to make Saint Louis University a destination for the most innovative scholars in the humanities and humanistic social sciences. When the Jesuit Archives are complete, scholars from around the world will come to Saint Louis. We need to leverage our work in digital humanities and the work done to build multi-institutional, multi-disciplinary research networks.

- Forge new ways to ensure that new knowledge is generated with those who could benefit from it. We will create new collaborations with industry, government, and non-profits, becoming a partner-of-choice to others who seek to use research to solve complex problems. We will enhance our highly-ranked entrepreneurship programs to better support students and faculty who launch for-profit and not-for-profit ventures to move knowledge out of the university and into the world.

The eminence of any research university is always and only an expression of the curiosities and passions of its faculty. The great research universities are more than the sum of individual efforts. They create an environment where faculty and students inspire one another, develop fruitful collaborations, and fully pursue bold and unconventional scholarly ambitions. Through our growth as a research institution, Saint Louis University will be strengthened in its teaching and service as well as by broader recognition of this faculty’s excellence and the value of a SLU degree.

Respectfully,

Nancy Brickhouse, Ph.D.
Provost
April 27, 2017

Dear Colleagues,

In this final letter of the semester on academic planning, I want to address current and future academic reinvention initiatives, including the leadership role of the faculty and the need of the University to support faculty work.

I sense that many are struggling to see what SLU will look like as we emerge – over time – from this phase of transformation and into a new institutional era. And that may be because much of the Magis Operational Excellence Program we’ve experienced thus far has focused on the deans’ efforts to meet aggressive financial goals. It’s true that a driving force behind the Magis Program has been the need to erase a serious operational budget deficit. SLU is not in a financial crisis – but we would be in years to come if we did not act boldly now; unlike fine wine, repeated deficit spending does not get better with time.

I am fully aware that expense reduction does not constitute “academic reinvention.” But we had to start by eliminating our operating deficit, right-sizing our staff and faculty, and reducing low-enrolled courses. When that first step is fully behind us, we will have restored the kind of stability on which true institutional transformation can and will happen. SLU has existed for nearly 200 years and in that time experienced periods of significant transformation mandated by changing student populations and changing educational, economic, and societal needs. We are in such a period now.

This period of transformation will take several years; reinvention will not happen overnight. Truly strategic decisions – those that recognize that a revitalized curricula, ambitious research agendas, our organizational infrastructures, our outreach to St. Louis and beyond – take time to both make and implement. But we have begun.

I want to share with you below a glimpse of SLU’s future – in undergraduate education, graduate education, and research – as the deans, President Pestello, and I have envisioned it through the academic reinvention process.

Undergraduate Education
The SLU undergraduate educational experience will be one that “helps actualize in each student a well-developed mind, a generous heart, and a reflective soul.” Like our Jesuit colleagues, SLU faculty and students do not live cloistered lives. They live for and among those they serve and those with whom, and from whom, they learn. Students will leave SLU career-ready, prepared to face local and global challenges, and with practical experience doing so.

Toward this vision for undergraduate education, to date we have:

- made significant progress toward adopting new undergraduate student learning...
outcomes that will direct the development of a University-wide core curriculum that will serve as SLU’s contemporary interpretation of the centuries-old Jesuit educational ideal. The outcomes will be presented for University-wide deliberation and endorsement early in Fall 2017.

- begun to analyze our academic and career advising services. We will implement a model of advising and related support that best facilitates developmentally-appropriate student academic and professional growth.
- committed to significantly reducing our reliance on part-time faculty, re-dedicating our full-time faculty to teaching undergraduates.
- developed a new Project Management major in the School for Professional Studies and moved Emergency Management to SPS where the degree programs are best positioned to serve adult learners.
- begun the process of moving Health Care Ethics to the College of Arts and Sciences, where the normative, mission-driven nature of their work can thrive.

But that is just a start to what will be a multi-year process of transformation. There is much left to do – much that has yet to be discussed or decided upon by faculty and appropriate academic leaders, including the following:

- design, implementation, and governance of a new core curriculum, [and] evaluation of outcomes that inform curricular revision.
- ensure that intellectual integration drives the design and redesign of all SLU curricula, as the world our students are committed to improve is not defined by academic disciplines or structures.
- ensure that our curricula are streamlined to afford students flexibility and foster their intellectual exploration.
- increase the number of internship and other experiential, community-engaged of global learning experiences.

Graduate Education
In the Jesuit tradition we develop principled leaders whose accomplishments strengthen our communities. All of our graduate programs will provide disciplinary and professional training and graduates will be distinguished by their ability to discern the ethical and moral implications of their work, and by their courage to lead for justice – particularly in addressing the social, economic, and cultural issues that challenge St. Louis and urban environments more generally.

Toward this vision for graduate-level education, we have:

- committed to grow the graduate programs in Parks College of Engineering, Aviation, and Technology; the Physician Assistant Program in the Doisy College of Health Sciences; and the Master of Public Health program in the College for Public Health and Social Justice. The School of Nursing aspires to expand its Ph.D. program and to become a leading program developing the next generation of nursing educators.
moved selected graduate programs into other colleges/schools with more appropriate academic ecosystems will help them grow. For example, while the Center for Sustainability has incubated several academic programs since its founding in 2010, those programs will be moved to other units as the Center focuses on fulfilling its goal to be a hub for interdisciplinary research in sustainability. Accordingly, the M.S. programs in Sustainability and Geographic Information Sciences will move to the College of Arts and Sciences; the M.S. in Urban Planning and Development will move to the School of Social Work; the Ph.D. in Sustainability will remain part of our Integrated and Applied Sciences program.

begun planning for the realignment of some academic units to break down barriers to interdisciplinary scholarship, pedagogy, and curriculum development.

Again, much more needs to be done at the graduate level, including:

- extending existing partnerships, and develop new partnerships, with other educational and research institutions, corporations, government entities, the legal community, or other “communities of innovation.”
- developing strong incentives – primarily to faculty, but also to academic leaders – to create new programs or grow existing ones.
- expand executive education programs and non-credit professional education across academic units to bolster our development of leaders already serving the St. Louis region (and beyond).

**Research**

SLU stands among the great Jesuit research universities that have created new knowledge through scientific and scholarly study and put that into practice in the classroom and community. Faculty research forms the foundation for that work and gives us an opportunity to use discovery to advance impactful teaching and service. The future of our fields, and the future of SLU, includes interdisciplinary research and discovery. We must work together to break down intellectual and organizational barriers to collaborative inquiry and advance impactful responses to the grand challenges of our time: poverty, food and water security, social and economic justice, healthcare for all, respect for human life and dignity, big data and secure computing.

Toward this vision for excellence in research at SLU, and through our academic reinvention work thus far, we have:

- engaged groups of SLU faculty – sometimes in partnership with colleagues at external institutions – to explore joint research opportunities in areas where SLU can be distinctive and connect faculty from multiple schools and departments in areas of common interest
- refocused the Center for Sustainability exclusively on the research agendas of its interdisciplinary faculty.
increased the number of grants made from the President’s Research Fund and added Spark Microgrants to provide more opportunities for “seed” funding for faculty research.

- supported dean-sponsored efforts to incentivize faculty who choose to seek external funding for research.
- begun planning for an improved electronic system that will make it easier for faculty to apply for funding and manage sponsored awards

The recently completed five-year Strategic Plan for Research will direct our efforts as we seek to:

- increase the number of faculty with external research funding and double the dollar value of our research enterprise.
- identify and prioritize areas where we can pursue our mission as well as be distinctive and eminent.
- create more opportunities for students to work with our distinguished faculty at every level.
- seek philanthropic support to make Saint Louis University a destination for the most innovative scholars in the humanities and humanistic social sciences.

* * *

The visions offered above, and our plans to achieve them, are fundamentally grounded in and dependent upon the faculty’s engagement, commitment, and leadership. Accordingly, we must do everything we can to empower and support faculty work across our shared purposes of teaching, research, health care, and service to the community. Central to our academic reinvention efforts must be our commitment to equitable workloads that are appropriately distributed to maximize the impact of faculty interests and expertise; significant and sustained support of faculty development initiatives; and recognition and rewards that demonstrably value faculty excellence. Only when we build up and retain a world-class faculty, and ensure equitable opportunities for their professional advancement and recognition, will we be able to realize the future we all envision.

Finally, our academic reinvention work thus far has clearly demonstrated that how we engage our faculty colleagues in this work is critical. I have been working with the deans directly, and they have been consulting with their faculty as appropriate in their colleges/schools. We’ve held many open fora encouraging input from students, faculty and staff. Timelines have sometimes been tight, but I’ve been impressed by the efforts of all to ensure contributions from as many constituents as possible. As we continue our transformational work, we must continue to prize open deliberation and transparency in decision-making. Ultimately, our greatness as an institution rests on our good faith in shared governance.
With that I will close this series of Spring 2017 communications on academic planning. In Fall 2018 we’ll hold more face-to-face meetings to discuss our planning and reinvention efforts. Until then, I thank everyone for their commitment to the stewardship of the University.

Respectfully,

Nancy Brickhouse, Ph.D.
Provost