March 1, 2016

Dear Colleagues,

In early January I moved into a 100+ year old home in Tower Grove South. Living in an urban environment is new for me, but wonderful. I love the energy, diversity, and authenticity of city living. While I have enjoyed the poetry of Wendell Berry for many years, I particularly like the way he writes about my new environs.

The Wild

In the empty lot — a place
not natural, but wild — among
the trash of human absence,

the slough and shamble
of the city's seasons, a few
old locusts bloom.

A few wood birds
fly and sing
in the new foliage

-- warblers and tanagers, birds
wild as leaves; in a million
each one would be rare,

new to the eyes. A man
couldn't make a habit
of such color,

such flight and singing,
But they're the habit of this wasted place. In them

the ground is wise. They are
its remembrance of what it is.

This poem was originally published in Berry's 1964 work The Broken Ground. It's also anthologized in Berry's New Collected Poems from 2012, which I recommend to all.

INTO Update

In January I traveled to Bangkok to introduce SLU to hundreds of INTO recruiters from around the world. There was great excitement about SLU throughout the group, as they held Jesuit education generally, and SLU's distinctive educational portfolio in particular, in high regard. SLU is the only Jesuit institution in the INTO portfolio — as well as the highest priced institution in their portfolio. Both of those factors mean that ensuring the academic quality of our INTO program is essential. SLU's ability to serve increasingly more students from throughout the world will be based on excellence and educational value — not so much on price.
Shortly after returning from my trip to Thailand I hopped right back on a plane for our Madrid campus, where the governing board of SLU’s joint venture with INTO was meeting. With all the well-warranted discussion of how the INTO partnership will positively impact the University as a whole and the St. Louis campus in particular, it’s important to remember that the partnership is also designed to strengthen the international educational experience in Madrid, as well. In fact, INTO-sourced enrollment should bolster the permanent student base in Madrid, further solidifying that campus as its own, full-degree academic destination for students from around the world.

As noted above, it will be the quality of our ESL and coordinated degree programs that distinguishes SLU in the international education community. And that quality has to be matched by the availability of in-demand programs, as well as the curricular flexibility within those programs to enable students to appropriately bridge their ESL and degree program studies. Accordingly, Dr. Anneke Bart, Associate Professor of Mathematics and SLU’s Academic Director of the INTO program, is working with faculty from throughout the University to develop new “Accelerated Pathway” programs for incoming international students who need just one semester of ESL work as they transition to SLU degree programs. The majority of our two-semester Pathways are for undergraduate students. But there is demonstrable need for graduate-level education in the international community, and SLU could better meet that need by developing new, graduate-level Accelerated Pathway programs. If you have ideas on this front, please contact Anneke at bart@slu.edu.

With Diana Pascoe-Chavez’s decision to return to teaching within SLU’s English as a Second Language (ESL) program, we’re launching a national search for a new Academic English Coordinator. We’re indebted to Diana for her leadership of the program over the years, and her key role in the transition to our partnership with INTO.

Two final INTO notes: First, early admissions counts for Fall 2016 INTO enrollments indicate we are on track to meet enrollment expectations. Second, Baracha Hall is currently undergoing renovations to better accommodate our ESL program’s needs starting in the Fall.

**Proposed Academic Organizational Changes**

Two proposed changes to our current academic organizational structure are currently under discussion. The first is the division of the current Mathematics and Computer Science department into two distinct departments within the College of Arts and Sciences (CAS): 1) the Department of Mathematics and Statistics and 2) the Department of Computer Science. A change many of the current unit’s faculty and chairs have considered for a number of years, this move would allow each new department’s faculty to more freely cultivate their scholarly and pedagogical identities while still fostering the interdisciplinary collaboration so valued amongst their faculties. The proposed separation is more than amicable.

A second proposed change involves the re-assignment of the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders (CSD) from the CAS to the Doisy College of Health Sciences. As the home of clinically-based health science programs, CSD shares much with other departments in Doisy College. There are intellectual and professional affinities
amongst the faculty and students of CSD and Doisy's other departments, as well as opportunities to strengthen collaboration of CSD and Doisy faculty to their mutual scholarly and pedagogical benefit. CSD Chair Travis Threats and CAS Dean Chris Duncan strongly support the proposed move, which also has the support of the CAS chairs and Faculty Council. Doisy department chairs and Dean Mardell Wilson are in favor of the change, as well. Note that there is no intent to physically move the CSD department from its current location in McGannon Hall, where its newly-renovated space works well for the faculty, students, and clinic patients.

**New Faculty Workload Policy**
The Faculty Senate Task Force concluded its work to develop a draft of a University-level policy governing faculty workloads across all SLU colleges, schools, and centers. Their draft was unanimously approved by the full Faculty Senate, a sign of both the quality of their work and the collegial spirit in which it was conducted.

After receiving their draft and making several edits, I have endorsed the policy and adopted it for implementation, effective immediately; a copy of the new policy can be accessed via the following link to the “Academic Affairs Policies” page on the Provost's Office website:

http://www.slu.edu/the-office-of-the-provost/academic-affairs-policies

In short, the policy calls for all academic departments (or programs or equivalent units) to develop workload policies of their own within the parameters established in the University-level policy. Please consult the policy for details of the approval process for those department/program-level policies. My hope is that all such policies, after being reviewed and endorsed by the respective deans/directors and the Faculty Senate are submitted to me for review by June 1, 2016.

With our shared workload expectations now codified, chairs and deans will be even better able to ensure workload equity throughout their units and across the University.

**Magis Operational Excellence Program**
Many thanks to the hundreds of faculty and staff who attended last week’s “Town Hall” meetings about the Magis Operational Excellence Program. Hopefully the meetings served to answer many of your questions, dispel a few myths, and reflect the transparency with which we intend this initiative to be conducted. I recognize that such a critical review of all University operations will be unsettling to many; there’s no denying that the project will indeed be challenging for us all. But there’s already evidence that it can be invigorating, as well, if we approach it in the spirit of reflection and improvement for the greater good of those whom the University seeks to serve. This truly is an opportunity for faculty, staff, and students to offer their best ideas for making SLU a better, stronger, more transformative institution.

As a reminder, we’re still very much in the data collection phase of the initiative. Bain consultants and SLU faculty and staff from the Steering Committee continue to conduct interviews and focus groups to complement the quantitative data, reports, and other documents they’re collecting from all areas of the University.

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As we roll into Spring Break and I round the turn toward completion of my first year at SLU, I remain energized by your shared commitment to the greater good of the SLU community. I only hope that my own work this year reflects that commitment, and that together we strengthen our commitment for the years to come.

Nancy Brickhouse, Ph.D.
Provost