November 2, 2015

Dear Colleagues,

SLU's mission – grounded in the pursuit of truth – calls us to both grow and advance the impact of our academic research enterprise. During my time here at SLU, I have heard many of you express your aspirations for elevating SLU's research profile; SLU can and should be well recognized for generating knowledge that both informs and transforms a more just and humane world. I share those aspirations.

Our shared aspirations require the strategic investment of limited resources. We need to consider carefully where we have the greatest opportunities to have the most impact. We also need to consider how we can grow our enterprise by collaborating across the university and with external partners. I write today to share with you updates on several new initiatives, now underway, that exhibit those strategic principles. These initiatives will enhance the research productivity of our faculty and students, as well as attract scholars to SLU to conduct research that they cannot do elsewhere.

**Search for a Vice President for Research and Graduate Studies**

The strengthening of our commitment to research begins with our commitment to excellence in the leadership of our research operations. Accordingly, next week I will charge a committee to conduct a national search for a new position at SLU: a Vice President for Research and Graduate Studies.

As I noted earlier this term, the opportunity to more intentionally and collaboratively organize our graduate education and research enterprises resulted from 1) the decision of Diana Carlin, Associate Provost for Graduate education, to retire in December 2015; and 2) the decision of Raymond Tait, currently Vice President for Research, to return to the faculty in the Department of Neurology and Psychiatry. I am deeply appreciative of their service. Dr. Carlin's work will be continued by Dr. Terry Tomazic through June 2015. Dr. Tait will continue to serve in his role until an appointment for this new leadership position is finalized.

Chairing this search committee is Debbie Zand (Associate Professor of Pediatrics in the School of Medicine); her colleagues are Thomas Burroughs (SLUCOR), Daniel Hoft (IM- Infectious Diseases), Takako Nomi (Educational Studies), Michelle Sabick (Biomedical Engineering), Gretchen Salsich (Physical Therapy), Mario Schootman (Epidemiology), Travis Threats (Communication Sciences and Disorders), and Tobias Winright (Center for Health Care Ethics). Mirah Horowitz, of the executive search firm Russell Reynolds, will be the lead consultant helping us generate a diverse, national pool of candidates. Our goal is to have finalists on campus in late spring.

**Center for Digital Humanities**

The Center for Digital Humanities (CDH) was created in 2013 as a collaboration between the College of Arts and Sciences' Center for Digital Theology and Pius XII Memorial Library. Although in existence for only two years, the CDH has built a strong record of success. However, the summer 2015 departure of the Center's Director, Jim Ginther, raised questions for some about SLU's support for the Center.

I am delighted to report on two developments that will support the Center and its work. First is an effort to plan for the long-term future of the CDH. I have charged a new task force to consider how we might best leverage the resources we have available now -- the collections, space, equipment, and expertise; the task force is also charged to offer recommendations for the future organization and leadership of the CDH, as well as how existing and new collaborations with internal and external partners could strengthen even further the CDH's scholarly impact. Leading this effort is Peter Martens (chair, Theological Studies); his
colleagues on the task force include: Christopher Collins (Special Assistant to the President for Mission and Identity), Thomas Finan (History), Michael Goldwasser (Mathematics and Computer Science), Kate Moran (American Studies), Gregory Pass (Pius XII Memorial Library), Sara van den Berg (American Studies).

A second important development is that the Southern and Central Jesuit Provinces have jointly purchased a warehouse on West Pine - just across the street from Boileau Hall - to serve as the new site for the Jesuit Archives. This dedicated space will ensure that the rich collection of critically-important historical materials is accessible to a wide range of scholars and students. This collection, along with the ongoing digital research projects in SLU's Pius XII Library, the Ong Center, and the Vatican Film Library, provide opportunities for scholarship that is both distinctive and fundamentally aligned with SLU's mission and institutional identity.

Core Research Equipment and Facilities for the Natural Sciences

The University will soon purchase a 700 MHz High-Field Nuclear Magnetic Resonance (NMR) Spectrometer (an industry-driving high-tech tool for determining the structure of proteins and nucleic acids). An NMR is standard equipment at top research institutions today, and the lack of a high-capacity NMR has significantly limited research in the basic and biomedical sciences across multiple academic units at SLU -- especially the following:

- Biology
- Biochemistry and Molecular Biology
- Biomedical Engineering
- Chemistry
- Pharmacology and Physiological Sciences
- Physics

An NMR of this caliber will also bring academic and corporate-industry-based researchers from throughout the region to SLU to conduct their own research and - if we're appropriately strategic about our relationship development - to partner with SLU faculty on collaborative research projects; we also look to new collaborations spurred by the co-location of researchers utilizing the NMR.

Income from external use of the NMR will help off set the costs of this investment. Those costs - which include portions of the recent renovation of Shannon Hall, where the NMR will be housed - will be shared equally from two non-operational sources: the University's FY16 capital budget, and the Dolby Endowment Fund, which specifically provides support for research-oriented projects and equipment.

The NMR will help existing researchers at SLU advance their research agendas, as well as enable departments to recruit new faculty interested specifically in the use of this cutting-edge instrument. This acquisition will also lead to improved interdisciplinary collaborations across both the North campus and Medical Center, and foster new directions of study.

Since each NMR is custom made for a purchasing institution, we do not expect ours to arrive on campus for at least a year - allowing time to fully prepare the space in Shannon Hall for its arrival.
Search for a New Dean of Parks College of Engineering, Aviation, and Technology

Advancing the research and scholarship agendas and capacities across all SLU colleges, schools, and centers is a high priority for me – but particularly true of Parks College. As an academic unit challenged by changes in departmental and college-level leadership, Parks needs a Dean who can unite and build upon the demonstrable strengths of the College’s faculty. At this time I believe the best candidate would be an internal one – someone who understands the culture of SLU, of Parks College, and who can step in and immediately move the College forward.

Accordingly, the search for the new dean of Parks College will be limited to tenured SLU faculty. Chairing the search committee is Dr. Mardell Wilson (Dean, Doisy College); her colleagues on the committee are Chris Carroll (Civil Engineering), Amy Harkins (Pharmacology and Physiology), Terrence Kelly (Aviation Science), Kyle Mitchell (Electrical and Computer Engineering), Sue Ratz (Parks College), Michael Swartwout (Aerospace and Mechanical Engineering), and Silviya Zustiak (Biomedical Engineering). My goal is to have an appointment made by March 2016.

Finally, a Reminder

I’d like to remind all faculty and staff in the academic units that I will be delivering an address on the State of Academic Affairs at SLU this week on November 4th in the LRC on the Medical Center Campus from 3:30pm-5:00pm; I’ll offer the same presentation on the Frost Campus in the Pere Marquette Gallery (DuBourg Hall, 2nd Floor), from 3:30pm-5:00pm. I encourage you to come to either session. You might even consider going to the session that is on the end of campus where you do not regularly work. You may hear a different set of questions/concerns/aspirations than you normally do. Note that I will soon schedule a similar presentation for our colleagues in Madrid.

In fact, I’ve just returned from Madrid – it was my first visit to meet our remarkable faculty, staff, and students in the heart of one of the most culturally-rich cities in the world. If only I had studied Spanish rather than German I would have been less reliant on others; thankfully, the English of our Madrid colleagues is spectacular.

Respectfully,

Nancy