

Town Hall Meeting

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Let me take a moment to provide a context for the more nuts and bolts considerations that constitute the substance of my comments this afternoon. I am sure you are aware that Larry Summers' recent forced resignation as President of Harvard generated a plethora of op-ed pieces across the country on higher education. The March 6, 2006 essay in *Time* magazine referenced three recent books by very prominent academics on the topic of higher education in the United States — each was quite critical of our elite research institutions. The titles of the books will tell you a lot. Derek Bok, former and now acting President of Harvard, published *Our Underachieving Colleges*. Harry Lewis, forced out as Dean of Harvard College by Summers, just published *Excellence Without a Soul*; and Harold Shapiro, who served as President of both Michigan and Princeton Universities, authored *A Larger Sense of Purpose*.

All three books have at least one theme in common: the lack of an ultimate sense of purpose for undergraduate and professional education at North America's elite universities. Lewis contends that education has been reduced "to an easy compromise among academics rather than a long-term commitment to the welfare of students and the society they will serve." Bok argues that if education would aim at helping students "...analyze more rigorously, become more ethically discerning, be more knowledgeable and active in civic affairs, society will be the better for it." All three authors assert that these institutions suffer from being driven by external markers of success and prestige rather than by core beliefs and a common commitment to an education that prepares students to become fully engaged members of the global community. I would argue that this "larger purpose" which eludes most universities distinctively characterizes USF's education in the Jesuit Catholic tradition.

Bok suggests, among other remedies, that universities need to undertake a serious effort to determine whether or not students are making greater progress toward an institution's educational goals today than they were 50 years ago. Lewis' cure for what ails higher education is that "teaching should be a serious component of faculty-hiring criteria, not simply a peripheral item... 'teaching' needs to be more than skill at lecturing and leading seminars." Institutions, he insists, must find ways to honor those faculty and staff who advance the values central to the educational mission of the institution beyond the learning environment.

It is probably clear by now what I am suggesting. USF already is where Bok, Lewis and Shapiro think that higher education ought to be. USF has a clear and compelling mission that faculty and staff support. We know that education is not just about increasing students' capacity to analyze, synthesize and criticize; it is also about what students do with their lives once their formal education is behind them. We know that education embraces the minds and hearts of our students and, therefore, engages the minds and hearts of faculty and staff who bear the responsibility of delivering the curricular and co-curricular components of this education. We know that quality with regard to faculty involves both outstanding teaching and significant scholarly/creative work. USF staff members reflect an uncommon

competence in what they do as well as a deep concern for how they do it. We believe in the education that we offer and know that we ourselves must embody the values of character, maturity, integrity, commitment, compassion and empathy as well as scholarly excellence and academic rigor. USF is not an *either/or* institution. We are a *both/and* entity and our challenge is all the greater for that. It is not intellect *or* character; teaching *or* scholarship and creativity; learning *or* service; competency *or* empathy; it is not academic rigor *or* changing the world. It is *both/and*. We should be very proud of our distinctive mission and the integrity and vigor with which we pursue it.

Last Saturday, I stood here in McLaren, then packed full of parents and prospective students. As I described for them the *both/and* character of a USF Jesuit education, I could see heads nodding up and down in agreement and warm smiles of assent across the room. People want an education that challenges them as students and as persons; they hope for both intellectual and personal development from their USF education. I also cited a letter from a student who wrote to me about her teacher: “Her passion for her scholarly work and her students is undeniable... She inspires us to excel and participate. She is demanding and supportive.”

In the fall a parent wrote to a USF faculty member and copied me: “Your passion and dedication to teaching is evidenced by the positive relationships and impact you’ve had on your students... our son values your intelligence, integrity, compassion and honesty. He views you as a role model and mentor who has helped him grow as a student and as a person.” I think the final reflection of a faculty member will resonate with all of us: “My sense of accomplishment is vicarious, dependent in part on hearing from my former students about the creative things they have done with what they have learned.”

USF is blessed with staff across the University who embody the *both/and* character of the education that we offer in and out of the classroom. You may not be as aware as I am of the near heroic effort put forth by staff from Academic Services and University Life to accommodate the post-Katrina influx of students or realize how much creativity and effort it took from our staff to design and put in place the new one-stop service for students. I see all too often how effectively USF staff — counselors, coaches, department assistants, University Life, Residence Life and Human Resources personnel — respond to tragedies and personal crises of every shape and size. We are the right people for educating minds and hearts to change the world.

Among its core values, USF lists *excellence* as the standard against which we measure all of our activities. I want us to realize how fortunate we are to be an institution where the pursuit of excellence is not an excuse for focusing too narrowly on external measures of success and ignoring a whole set of issues and concerns that constitute a quality Jesuit Catholic education in the 21st century.

It is in this context — the pursuit of excellence, broadly understood — that I would situate our current planning efforts, which I think benefit from a more systematic and coherent process than ever before; one that has begun to link planning and budgeting across the University. Let me quickly review with you the handout you received.

- a. An integral process of planning and budgeting requires better ongoing communication with the University community.
- b. The cycle of program reviews includes academic departments and all University services. It involves external reviewers to ensure outside opinions on how we are doing.
- c. The planning model identifies and addresses issues in a systematic and ongoing manner instead of time spent writing a plan that would be more likely to serve as a doorstop than an impetus to improve quality across the University.

There are clear signs of improved quality across the University that I want to review quickly with you:

- Undergraduate applications have increased 100% over the past four years. This year we had over 7,000 applicants. Incoming class size has not increased significantly over these years, so we have become more selective and able to improve the academic profile of incoming first year and transfer students.
- With a month and a half still to go in the fiscal year, we have received over \$4.5 million in external support for faculty scholarship and/or artistic expression. This includes five National Science Foundation grants in the College of Arts and Sciences; a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities; and substantial grants from the U.S. Department of Education and National Institutes of Health.
- I don't think that we have had a year in which our faculty members have received more national recognition for their work. I am not going to name them all — five pages worth — but I will list a few: Steve Schloesser, S.J., received the John Gilmary Shea award for the best book on Catholic history; Rachel Crawford, the Alpha Sigma Nu award for the best book in the humanities; Joshua Gamson's book won the American Library Association's 2006 Stonewall Book Award for Nonfiction; John Stilwell received the American Math Association's Chauvenet Prize for the best article in mathematics; Tracy Seeley is the recipient of the Sheila K. Smith Short Story Prize from the National League of Pen Women. Kevin Chun's research earned him the status of "one to watch" from the American Psychological Association and a full page spread in their journal; Doug Powell's book of poetry achieved finalist status in competition for the National Book Critics Circle Award. Tom McCarthy's article on trademark law was judged one of the year's best intellectual property articles. Susan Evans and Yvonne Bui secured another highly competitive \$800,000 grant from the Office of Special Education in the Department of Education. I offer just enough examples to illustrate my earlier point that USF is about faculty members who are both outstanding teachers and first-rate scholars.
- The Carnegie Foundation recently invited USF to apply for the new Community Involvement classification that is being developed by the foundation. USF is one of only 100 universities invited to do so. This classification will be awarded to those universities that are judged to promote exemplary community involvement on the part of faculty, students and staff. Prospective students and their parents interested in this kind of education will find a limited number of universities endorsed by Carnegie for combining a rigorous education with a service orientation.

- The Capital Campaign has raised \$148 million towards our goal of \$175 million. I thank all of you for your personal support; very few institutions boast the same high percentage of support from faculty and staff. This is solid evidence that we believe in what we do, and that's one reason why we do it so well.

Earlier in my talk, I mentioned that Derek Bok insisted that American universities must make a genuine effort to determine whether or not students are making greater progress towards their educational goals than they were fifty years ago. Bok underscores what he considers a surprising lack of self-examination on the part of colleges with regard to the assessment of teaching effectiveness. The best yardstick with which to measure good teaching is student learning. The question of whether students are learning what we want them to learn is a fair one that deserves a satisfying answer. While it is admittedly difficult to determine whether a student has achieved self-knowledge or acquired a satisfying philosophy of life, to make that same assertion about writing skills, quantitative reasoning, critical thinking and analytical abilities is questionable. In this regard, the forthcoming WASC re-accreditation process is "our friend." USF is currently in the middle of the second stage of the new process of re-accreditation. This process is ultimately designed to motivate us to determine whether or not USF students are learning what we think they need to learn in order to function as effective members of the global community.

The initial document outlining our plan for the overall assessment of USF's educational effectiveness was accepted without changes and subsequently used during WASC workshops as the model proposal. A committee of over 50 USF faculty and staff is currently working on a second document that demonstrates USF's capacity to offer the education we promise students in our mission statement. I ask for your full cooperation with this effort when you are invited to provide feedback to document drafts from time to time. This is not an exercise in external compliance, but an opportunity for a University-wide effort to improve the overall quality of the educational experience at USF. That's the mindset I hope that we all bring to this important endeavor.

As you may be painfully aware, the University established an Office of Internal Audit about a year and a half ago. The Board of Trustees created this position with strong encouragement from the Audit Committee. The need for this position lies completely beyond the University and may be traced to the corporate abuses of Enron, WorldCom and Tyco. In the wake of those scandals, federal legislation was enacted to prevent such abuses in the future. The Sarbanes-Oxley Act required a sharper separation of auditing from managing functions, closer scrutiny of financial records by auditors, stricter policies and controls over resources, and more effective checks and balances within a corporation to ensure that resources are accurately accounted for and appropriately utilized. Some argue that the legislation is heavy-handed and has gone too far; that auditors are now obsessively preoccupied with protecting themselves, that the procedures and policies of control are excessively time-consuming and costly. I think there is truth in those allegations. Nonetheless, the reality is that federal and state agents are now looking as closely at not-for-profits as they are at for-profit corporations. Like it or not, we are in an environment not of our making or choosing, but one that we cannot ignore and must adjust to. It is important to realize that our internal efforts are a

response to these external factors, and that we must move quickly to identify problems and put adequate control mechanisms in place before others do so for us.

There is no doubt that this new environment is annoying and stressful, but it is one within which we will have to reach some state of institutional equilibrium. Our internal auditor, Dom Daher, is neither Kojak nor Crusader Rabbit. He is responsible for helping us identify problems before federal or state officers do so, and USF finds its tax status in jeopardy or its financial stability in question. He works to ensure that our auditors will certify that the data we give them is accurate and trustworthy. The Internal Auditor reports administratively to the President and is ultimately responsible to the Board's Audit Committee; he is completely independent from any University office or division.

This environment is as new for me as it is for you, and we are all in a learning mode with regard to what is required and expected of us to satisfy external auditors and state and federal agencies. As we work to educate each other on what is expected and how we express and meet those expectations, patience and mutual respect will serve us well during this difficult period of adjustment. We cannot let this effort undermine the strong sense of community that we have worked to develop at USF.

A word about the classroom situation: This is one of those good news/bad news deals. The good news is that with the addition of four new classrooms on the fourth floor of Cowell, we can accommodate next year's schedule, even without Kalmanovitz. The bad news, at least for some, is that we can only do so on the basis of a nine-hour day and a full five day week. We cannot run the bulk of our classes between 10:00 a.m.–3:00 p.m., and allow our classrooms to lie fallow on Fridays.

Another bit of good news is that the new scheduling software allows us to do in one hour what previously took 1.5 days. We can respond in a much more timely and effective manner to last minute readjustments in the schedule. My appreciation to Archie Porter and his staff for the great job the registrar's office does under a lot of pressure and off everyone's radar screen.

We are also looking to improve orientation for new undergraduate students. We want the program to be more academic, more integral, more participatory and more than just a three day "high" that launches the academic year. We are working to create a transition into the University that will be followed up and supported throughout the first year.

Those areas or issues that I did not cover in my comments may be addressed in the question and answer period.

Let me conclude with a letter from a recent graduate that was sent to Dean Gary Williams two weeks ago. The young woman expressed her appreciation to the staff and faculty who supported her at the time of her father's death and did everything they could to ensure that she kept up with her classes. She concludes the letter as follows: "USF has given me such an incredible gift. Not only was I provided with an outstanding education that allowed me to confidently enter the accounting field, but it also provided me with the examples, lessons and

philosophy that make me strive to be a better person in mind, body and soul. I will treasure all that USF has given me forever.” *Both/And*: both an outstanding education and the wherewithal to be better person. Here at USF we may celebrate the fact that the pursuit of excellence is not an excuse for neglecting the personal development of students.

That young woman underscores what I want you to realize. The three authors cited in my talk notwithstanding, USF represents excellence with a soul. USF aims to achieve society’s hopes for the college-educated. USF effectively communicates to students the larger sense of purpose that should drive the human enterprise.

I know that people are tired and frazzled at this time of year, but do stop and realize — as I do — that our students will treasure forever what you as faculty and staff give them here at USF. Thank you for your attention.