President affirms student-centered significance of our mission

If last year seemed like an uncharacteristically busy year at Gonzaga ... it was. We launched the Capital Campaign, kicked off the regional health partnership with the University of Washington School of Medicine, worked with architects to plan multiple new facilities, implemented the revised Core curriculum, hired 42 new faculty members, worked on compensation and leadership development for staff, and underwent four administrative searches.

At staff and faculty assemblies earlier this fall, President Thayne McCulloh shared that, while the work continues on all those projects from last year, we’re going to put a great deal of time and effort into some priorities that he believes are the foundation for all we do.

"Of great importance is developing a work culture across campus that is rooted deeply in our Mission and demonstrated in mutual respect for all of our colleagues," said McCulloh. "We also need to engage faculty in dialogue around the future of higher education."

Other priorities he discussed:

- Look at our investments in light of our environmental sustainability mission;
- Offer competitive financial aid packages, which necessitates finding sources of revenue besides tuition; and
- Move forward in our discussions and work around racial, ethnic, cultural diversity, equity and inclusion as issues of injustice continue to make headlines across the nation.

Alongside these monumentally important issues, another area of focus on the president’s mind is putting the well-being of our students first. Many students are overwhelmed during this period of change in their lives. Some come to us quite vulnerable and challenged in their ability to cope with anxiety and stress.

“How will we respond to them?” McCulloh asked. “Every one of us on this campus may have an opportunity to be the difference, to be the one who notices a struggling student and makes a connection. Our highest priority is making sure we are paying close attention to and understanding who our students are and the issues they face, being thoughtful and careful about the stereotypes we perpetuate about the college experience.”

To accentuate that, McCulloh shared a story about a phone call he received from the father of a student – John McKenna – who passed soon after his graduation due to cancer. The family had a special request: Would Gonzaga consent to having the University seal carved on their son’s gravestone? McCulloh said it was an incredibly humbling and profound realization, “that we have such precious opportunities to interact with our students, and to make an impact that will never be forgotten.”

This year is off to a busy start with groundbreakings and blessings, historical moments and great opportunities. But the greatest moments will be the times we connect with students and help them find their way.

– By Kate Vanskike

RESPOND TODAY
Strategic planning survey
Gonzaga wants your input. Please take the brief online strategic planning survey at www.gonzaga.edu/strategicplanningsurvey
“Our hope is to create an unforgettable first impression of Gonzaga, and provide new employees with clarity, enthusiasm and a sense of belonging. We want them to walk out understanding the mission and excited to be part of the Gonzaga culture,” says Caris Friberg, talent acquisition and effectiveness partner in Human Resources, describing the new employee orientation program, expected to begin early next year.

What does unforgettable mean? It means a lot of different things, but in conversation with new employees it meant ensuring the process was actually a transformational experience into the Gonzaga culture.

The New Employee Experience is no longer a one-day marathon but has been divided into two half-day sessions to lessen the information overload. Day one in Hemmingson Center includes focus on mission and vision, values, a welcome from the cabinet, Staff Assembly, sustainability, diversity, representing our brand, lunch in the COG with the day’s presenters, and a campus tour. “Some employees may never directly interact with students, so inviting them to the Hemmingson and to have lunch with our students allows newcomers to experience our students firsthand,” Friberg said. During the second half-day session, the focus is everything from environmental health and safety, security and emergency preparedness, to Zags helping Zags and more.

New Employee Experience will grow and change as needed.

Campus life has changed considerably since Pat Lee’s school days here in the late 1960s. The south side of campus has been beautified and the Spokane River made visible. At least two dozen new or significantly renovated buildings provide home for our academic, co-curricular and residential life activities. We have a lay president for the first time. And Gonzaga is more Jesuit than it has been in 50 years, said the University’s new vice president for mission and ministry.

“Previously, we relied on the president to be the Jesuit standard bearer, but by not having that in place, it has made the whole community take it on,” said Fr. Lee, S.J. “Thayne is more Jesuit than we were because he’s doing it in such an inclusive way.”

Fr. Lee, from the class of 1969 is coincidentally 69, and couldn’t be happier to be back on campus: for the fourth time. “To come back to Gonzaga is like coming home for me. I am so glad to come back to a community that has a love for me and me for it,” he said.

Fr. Lee returned in 1978 following ordination to serve in student development, where he worked with Maureen Sheridan to found the counseling center. He came back for the third time as vice president for mission during Fr. Robert Spitzer’s presidency.

“I am thankful Thayne was so willing to offer me the opportunity to come here. Thayne has a great care for who we are, and makes us (Jesuits) feel needed and wanted,” Fr. Lee said. McCulloh brought Lee back to reinforce, perhaps even strengthen, the Jesuit, Catholic, humanistic mission of Gonzaga, and combine the similar efforts of mission and ministry.

“Previously, this office focused on its relationship with faculty, staff and our governing boards,” Fr. Lee said. “This combining of offices will help us to better serve all our campus community, including students. It will help unify the University under one mission.”

The benefit is arming our graduates with the mission to share with their new communities. “I want to keep inviting people into the mission, introducing them to what it is all about. The staff is the first group that can go deeper into the Ignatian Mission. We see beautiful gardens, clean bathrooms, residence halls that are in good shape. In certain ways, it’s the eight-hour people who are really carrying the mission and they need time for reflection so we all understand where and who we are.”

“We also want to make sure the students know the important questions, in Student Development and in academics, what does it mean to be a contributing human being. How do we all love each other, love humanity and give other people the dignity that love requires?” Fr. Lee said. “Over my years away, the faculty have worked to keep the mission central to their teaching. Gonzaga is a mission-centered place; now, we just go deeper.”
New Hires

Caleigh Sullivan, CEDE asst., Engineering; Joshua Therrien, head athletic trainer; Athletics; Joshua Schultz, asst. prof., Civil Engineering; Nichole Calkins, asst. prof., Sport & Physical Education; Melanie Person, asst. prof., Counselor Education; Robert Siebking, instructor, Religious Studies; Kevin Vander Velde, asst. prof., Religious Studies; Maria Tackett, asst. prof., Economics; Joan Braun, lecturer-AT, Philosophy; Yu-Kyung Kang, asst. prof., English; Ricky Stookey, lecturer-AT, Philosophy; Mohammed Farooqi, lecturer-AT, Physics; Monique De Nyschen, lecturer-AT, Nursing; Nadira Dhanasawar, asst. prof., Nursing; Daniel Bloomingdale, lecturer-AT, Comm. Studies; Christopher Pilot, lecturer-AT, Physics; Alyssa Holan, lecturer-AT, Modern Languages; Adam Stivers, asst. prof., Psychology; Melissa Click, lecturer-AT, Comm. Studies; Noralis Rodriguez-Coss, lecturer-AT, Teaching Fellow, WGST; Donald Garrett, asst. prof., Sport & Physical Education; Benjamin Cartwright, historian AT, English; Zaya Russtamo, lecturer-AT, Modern Languages; Sarah Blake, lecturer-AT, Sociology; David Summers, lecturer-AT, English; David Nielson, lecturer-AT, Modern Languages; Thomas Guardia ortega, lecturer-AT, Mathematics; Jennifer Hamilton, lecturer-AT, Sport & Physical Education; Borre Urichsen, chief information officer, ITS; Paul Bracke, dean, Foley Library; Richard Martin, custodian, Plant; Peter Kondratuk, custodian, Plant; Courtney Law, director, UW-GU Regional Health Partnership; Samuel Macdonald, director, trademark & licensing, Athletics; Kristie Infantine, social media specialist, Marketing & Comm.; Jonathon Kemper, physics lab specialist, Physics; Rebeka Hott, study abroad advisor, Study Abroad; Josephine Owens, accounting asst. I, Student Accounts; Karen McWilliams, registered dietitian, Health & Counseling Services; Madison Keaty, asst. women’s rowing coach; Anabel Madera, admin. asst., Education; Theresa Hauenstein, admin. asst., Arts & Sciences; Jonathan Arnott, custodian, Plant; Jenna White, admin. asst. II, President’s Office; Andrew Juarez, intern graphic designer, Marketing & Comm.; Patrick Lee, S.J., vice president for University Mission & Ministry; Cynthia Caniglia, lecturer-AT, Special Education; Grant Lenarduzzi, lecturer-AT, Leadership & Admin.; John Maxwell, instructor, Civil Engineering; James Weston, lecturer-IR, Mechanical Engineering; Mark Bowman, lecturer-IR, Philosophy; Richard Nungester, lecturer-IR, Electrical Engineering; Faith Gilbert, compliance coord., Sponsored Research

NEW POSITIONS/PROMOTIONS

Dan Xu, prof., Finance; Molly Pepper, prof., Management; Kevin Hendrickson, prof., Economics/Chair; Vivek Patil, prof., Marketing; Sara Kern, prof., Accounting; Cynthia Johnson, assoc. prof., Leadership & Admin.; Connie Lipsker, senior lecturer-AT, Marketing; Jeffrey Dodd, asst. prof., English; Gregory Gordon, assoc. prof., Environmental Studies; Kevin O’Connor, prof., History; John Horsman, senior lecturer-AC, Organizational Leadership; Jonathan Isaoff, prof., Political Science; Gergely Gidofalvi, assoc. prof., Chemistry; David Oosterhuis, assoc. prof., Classical Languages; Kristina Morehouse, senior lecturer-AT, Comm. Studies; Jessica Halliday, senior lecturer-AT, English; Ronald Prindle, assoc. prof., Integrated Media; Joseph Mudd, assoc. prof., Religious Studies; Jennifer Miller, lecturer-AT, Nursing; Stephen Hayes, asst. prof., Biology; Tyler Tritten, asst. prof., Philosophy; Ashley Sundlin, head public services librarian, Law Library; Dalaen Neiter, IT support technician II, Law School; Caitlin Geis, program coord. asst. II, Admissions Visit Office; Matthew Nelson, case manager, Cura Personalis; Shanae Giroux, asst. to the VP for Policy, Admin. & Planning; Ruben Yamada, admissions counselor. Admissions; Joanne Sarles, professional advisor, Engineering & Applied Science

Goodbyes

Rafael Flores, comm. specialist, Law School; John Hobbs, coord., Student Activities; Laura Hathorn, library technician III, Library Services; Patricia Leahy-Charles, program coord. I, Law School; Danielle Loparo, accounting asst. III, Student Accounts; Duran Paasch, event operations specialist, Hemmingson Center; Rachel Smith, receptionist/office coord., Hemmingson Center; Martha Gonzales, assoc. prof., Modern Language; Merri Harts, access services librarian, Law School; Cecelia Hoffer, circulation specialist, Law Library; Daniel Cornwell, HVAC technician, Plant; Juana Jasso, director student identity development & inclusion initiatives, UMEC; Brittany Preston, international counselor & recruiter, International Student & Scholar Services; Tyler Wasson, program coord. I, Center for Global Engagement

ANNIVERSARIES

30
Gayle Clayton, admin., secretary II, Athletics

20
Stuart Davis, assoc. director of housing operations, Housing and Residence Life; Barbara Kolbet, asst. to the chancellor, Chancellor’s Office

10
Thomas Brown, turf manager, Athletics; Michael Roden, assoc. athletic director/student athlete support services, Athletics

5
Christopher Carter, custodian, Plant; Melony Chapman, admin., secretary II, Athletics; Joel Daley, custodian lead, Plant; Rachel Zack, science outreach coord., Biology

CRADLE CALL

Bailey Wootton, asst. director, CCASL, and spouse Michael had a baby girl, Hayden. Lacey Olson, receptionist, Health Center, and spouse David had a baby boy, Henry. Cassandra Slagg, communications and training manager, ITS, and spouse Dan had a baby girl, Adalyn.

Focus on…
A woman who radiates passion for others

Strawther’s most precious gift? Daughter Sophia, 8. Her passion? Composing choral music and hearing it come alive.

Rachelle Strawther meets challenges head on, pulls up her sleeves, seeks appropriate counsel and resource, and attacks with passion and perseverance.

Her formula has been quite effective. Gonzaga’s new Staff Assembly president, who moved to Spokane when she was 13, took a year’s leave from college to teach in Ethiopia. It whetted her appetite to help others in disadvantaged circumstances. Sound Jesuit?

At age 24, with an anthropology degree from Western Washington University, she moved to Kenya to volunteer with Kiwanis International, establishing a resource center for people affected by HIV/AIDS. The last two of her eight years in the East African country were spent managing a sports organization to promote behavior change for youth through soccer.

“It was the most pivotal time of my life, filled with challenges, failures and achievements. The culmination of all those experiences profoundly impacted how I view our role in the world,” said Strawther, assistant director of Leadership Training and Development in the School of Professional Studies.

Strawther feels strongly about employee engagement. “To create a truly engaged community, I think we have to understand what motivates each other, which begins with asking and listening,” said Strawther.

As president, one of her first moves with Staff Assembly was to reach out to unrepresented departments through focus groups. Eight focus groups involving 40 employees revealed many things, including a desire for Staff Assembly to better recognize staff who go above and beyond their jobs to contribute to the mission of the University. The Assembly is developing a staff recognition program, led by Rachel Young, Nursing, to provide opportunities for colleagues to appreciate each other’s contributions.

Other initiatives in the development stage include expanded professional development offerings and an opportunity for existing staff to orient new staff to the Gonzaga culture and Spokane community.

Through focus groups and conversation over coffee, Strawther and Staff Assembly members have learned a lot about the experiences of Gonzaga staff. “An employee in University Advancement recently shared with me how much morale increased after their leadership positively responded to employee needs and concerns,” Strawther said. “That’s inspiring. If people feel connected to Gonzaga the moment they arrive, if they feel listened to, valued and appreciated, our community will be more engaged.”

“Those of us who serve on Staff Assembly are passionate about making Gonzaga an even better place to work than it already is,” Strawther concluded. “Caring for the whole person and meeting people where they are at is a significant part of that… And that is truly Jesuit.”

Keeping up with Rudolf

Rudolf Fitness Center is getting more use than ever. Here are some things that contribute to its increased use, according to assistant directors Natalie Hastings and Tyler Seth: online class schedules; Twitter, Instagram (@IMZagsRFC) and Facebook marketing; events/activities displayed on video display boards in Rudolf; and intramural registration deadlines. New squat racks are being installed, black lights have been added to the spin studio, and private swim lessons have been popular with families.

Quick numbers:

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<th>Year</th>
<th>Visitors</th>
<th>Intramural participations</th>
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<td>2004-05</td>
<td>22,129</td>
<td>2,906</td>
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<td>2015-16</td>
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Jesuit Rector Jim Voiss, S.J., sees the new Jesuit Residence connecting the respite offered by the inside space with the natural environment through an outside courtyard. “This is more consistent with the ethos of this region where connection to the environment is what we really value in life,” he said.

Vice President for Mission and Ministry Pat Lee, S.J., sees the new home for Jesuits as a place to bring together all the Jesuit apostolates of the area, including St. Al’s and Gonzaga Prep. “Gonzaga is the center of Catholicism in this community, and this will become a place where we become animated among ourselves and inspired to do more,” Fr. Lee said.

Ground was ceremonially blessed on the new residence Sept. 29. The 36,074-square-foot building will provide 20 residents with their own bathrooms, showers and exterior balconies, something they have never enjoyed in the current Jesuit House. There will be two guest rooms and a small kitchen and dining area for individual Jesuits who choose to entertain guests. A chapel with flexible seating for multiple uses, a workout room and a dining room are also included. Construction cost is $8.7 million, and just over half that amount has been raised so far through private benefaction. Construction is expected to be completed late in 2017.

SYNERGY SOUGHT IN NEW JESUIT RESIDENCE

Day in the Life is a new Spirit feature which will appear periodically throughout the year.

Julia Bjordahl has worked for Gonzaga University for nearly 30 years in Faculty Services, Public Relations, School of Education, University Relations, and now the Office of the President.

“There is rarely a day that I am not excited to get up and come to work.” The president’s executive assistant is up by 5:30 every morning. She begins by checking her email to see what has come in over the evening. She’s not unlike many of us. She has a cup of coffee, makes breakfast and enjoys it with her daughter, Victoria (’18). She skims the newspaper, and then is off and running. She likes to arrive at work a bit early. “It gives me time to settle in and get organized before things get going.”

Every day starts with a daily spreadsheet, on which she tracks the president’s phone messages, tasks, and meeting and event requests. “What I like best about my work is that no two days are ever the same.”

Bjordahl meets with her colleagues Katie Galassi, Jenna White and John Sklut, every Monday morning at 9. “Together we review Dr. McCulloh’s calendar for the next three weeks, and discuss current projects and upcoming events.” They are now in the process of preparing for the December Board of Trustees meeting in Seattle, and making arrangements for the Employee Christmas Party, “which is always a lot of fun!”

Bjordahl attends the president’s cabinet meetings and accompanies him to meetings and events as requested. In particular, she enjoys being involved with the Presidential Speaker Series and his video projects, including his most recent Welcome Back Video with Maciej Kosinski and Przemek Karnowski.

She is highly organized, patient, resourceful and sometimes direct. Her sense of humor, long history with the University, and past experiences have helped shape her as one of Gonzaga’s true all-stars. And she’s got spunk. Lots of it. For Julia, her job is not about her, but about the president and the office. “I advise my staff that ‘when we respond, we are speaking on behalf of and representing the office of the president.’”

She tries to get away from the office for noontime TRX or spin classes at the Rudolf Fitness Center, the latter activity taught by Victoria. If work conflicts with her workout, she finds an evening workout class to fill her passion for physical exercise. “Exercise is my outlet. It clears my mind,” she said. “It’s kind of funny: Thayne often asks, ‘Did you see Gym today?’”

By 3 p.m. each day she prepares McCulloh’s daily binder, which includes his calendar and materials for the next day’s appointments and speaking engagements. She ends most days (along with Sklut) debriefing with the president on the current day’s activities, and preparing him for the next day.

It’s clear Julia thrives on the interactions with her daughters (Michaelyn ‘15 and Victoria ‘18). “It is inspiring to see young people (including my own daughters) enter GU as freshmen and leave with a degree having been transformed by this amazing Gonzaga experience – it is quite profound,” Bjordahl said.

“Upon my arrival back home, (husband) Mike usually has dinner ready. He is fabulous. I look forward to spending time with my family, and to another exciting day at Gonzaga.”