Time. What a contradiction of experiences we humans articulate for ourselves: we treasure the opportunities to spend time with the people we love, even as the world around us seems impelled to deliver information more rapidly. And our experience of time is elastic: how slowly time passes while we work at an onerous task, yet how quickly a joyous experience comes and goes. We spend much of our lives measuring the passage of time in modest increments: the hours between a blustery March afternoon when prospective students open their acceptance letters, and the August morning when glowing mothers, trembling fathers and excited students carry suitcases, milk crates, computers, and some highly individualized versions of a security blanket, into a residence hall made fragrant by new paint and sunbaked air. For that new student, the summer crawled by for an eternity and – in retrospect – flashed by in a blink.

Gonzaga University, its Jesuits, faculty, staff and administrators, have watched those incremental times come and go: mid-terms, due dates for essays, lab reports; dress rehearsals, semesters, and senior projects. At the time, to each student it seemed the semester would never end; in retrospect, how quickly it went. By this golden autumn of 2012 we have accumulated 125 years, supporting tens of thousands of young women and men – through periods of bounty and decades of great difficulty – through the transformational process of teaching and learning that occurs, step by step, in the incremental moment.

Gonzaga University first opened its doors on Sept. 17, 1887. Enrollment was 18 students – a fine start for the first Jesuit and Catholic university in the Northwest – and a far cry from the 1,100 freshmen who we will so proudly welcome to campus this fall. We shall in a few weeks celebrate our Historic First Day events. We do so knowing that 125 years is indeed a good stretch of time in which remarkable accomplishment – and change – occurs. While much has changed, I am always amazed – and proud – of how much that is “quintessentially Gonzaga” has remained. At the core of the Gonzaga experience are the deeply personal relationships between students, faculty, Jesuits, staff, and alumni. Gonzaga’s graduates cover the globe: While some stay in Spokane, many move beyond the Pacific Northwest, impacting lives through their talent and passion. Our graduates include Fulbright scholars, members of the Jesuit Volunteer Corps or the Peace Corps, those who enter the professions; graduate programs and medical schools continue to receive our alumni; and many create new paths as they explore their own passions in cities, towns and villages around the country and the world.

For me, our 125th anniversary has personal significance, for it was 25 years ago, during our centennial, that I began studies at GU. Which, in turn, evokes another reality: Whatever the future may hold for Gonzaga, it will continue a narrative that began with the Jesuits in the 19th century and has been lovingly extended by each successive class. Gonzaga’s next 10, 20, 50 years will reflect that history and the new challenges our cultures face. What an incredible opportunity; what a humbling responsibility.

Our intention in this issue of Gonzaga is to celebrate: not only the milestone anniversaries of our University and School of Law, but the accomplishments of our students, faculty and alumni – and to invite your ongoing participation in the life of this great institution. As summer comes to its conclusion, know that we are mindful of and grateful for your support. May Christ’s peace be with you and yours, now and always.