Developing a worthwhile vision requires certain raw ingredients: a tackle box filled with knowledge and experience; a measure of courage and purpose; a meditative, yet alert, frame of mind and, not least, a dram of good fortune. As I reflect on the year to come, I find us well-possessed of these elements: an excellent understanding of Gonzaga’s strengths in academic excellence, community and service learning; a driving desire to elevate those strengths; and the generosity and respect of our community, which are so emblematic of Gonzaga’s good fortune.

This summer, I have found no time for fishing and rather little for meditation since graduation in May. More than any other in memory, the months of June, July and August have motored across campus in overdrive. Consider:

In June, we bid the 59-year-old COG farewell, and Zag Dining commenced operations in the new Boone Avenue Retail Center. Throughout the summer we sponsored thousands of conference and summer-camp attendees, even as our faculty taught hundreds of courses. In mid-July, Gonzaga formally celebrated the largest single gift in its history – $25 million – given by John Hemmingson, our friend, trustee, benefactor and civic leader. That same day, a ceremonial groundbreaking and fire-lighting signaled the launch of construction for the “next generation” COG, our new University Center. This project will usher the University into a new era of engaging with issues and people worldwide – as befits this generation of students who in every recognizable way will lead global lives.

This summer, Sue Weitz was honored upon her retirement with the Harry H. Sladich Award; after highly successful national searches, the University welcomed to campus her successor, our new vice president for student development, and three new academic deans. We launched the new School of Nursing and Human Physiology, and we are preparing to celebrate the 50th anniversary of our pioneering and flagship study abroad program, Gonzaga-in-Florence. How long is 50 years, really? Fifty years ago, in September 1963, the Beatles first appeared on U.S. television. That same month, Gonzaga became only the third American university to embark on educating students in Florence, the city at the heart of the Western Renaissance.

Now, a new academic year is upon us. We look forward with anticipation to welcoming another entering class of unique, talented, and inspiring students. And always, we greet the new day with gratitude for the privilege of working to advance Gonzaga’s mission, and with deep appreciation for the support of so many. May the peace of Christ be with you and yours, always.