

Two Universities; One Jesuit Mission

- UCA, Managua
- March 20, 2014
- Stephen V. Sundborg, S.J.
President, Seattle University

Let me begin by extending my congratulations to Fr. Jose Alberto Idiáquez, S.J. in his inauguration as Rector of the University of Central America, Managua. I welcome him to the responsibility, the challenge, and the great joy of leadership of a Jesuit university which I also share. My hope is that this visit of a delegation of leaders from a Jesuit university in the United States, Seattle University, will be a support of his leadership here and some indication of the kind of things he is interested in bringing about

growing in its international connections, study abroad programs, faculty exchanges and global research, as well as in the globalization of our own curriculum. Dr. David Powers is the Dean of the largest of the eight schools or colleges of Seattle University, the College of Arts and Sciences, which on both the undergraduate and graduate levels perhaps most clearly embodies academically the purposes of Jesuit education in our university. Dr. Serena Cosgrove, herself a graduate of Seattle University and with a daughter currently one of our students, is a professor in our unique Matteo Ricci College and a leading scholar in Latin American issues and in particular in the leadership of women in Latin America. Dr. Joseph Orlando is the Assistant Vice President for Mission and Ministry. In this capacity he leads the programs, particularly for faculty and staff, which broaden and deepen our Ignatian and Jesuit identity. He also has much experience with Nicaragua, having led annual delegations of faculty and staff here for a dozen years. We believe we have the right team at hand in order to engage with you in making our partnership real. I believe we will all look back on this visit in the early weeks of Fr. _____ term as historic for how two universities can both benefit from and enrich the other in their Jesuit mission. Again thank you for inviting us.

_____ r to do that, let me: a) first
 tell you something about our university; then, b) try to distill from my seventeen years of
 experience as president of Seattle University

that in our system as private universities we need to do major fundraising to support our institutions and that requires many, many years of consistent work by a president if it is to be successful. We have 4,500 undergraduate students mostly between the ages of 18 and 22 and 3,000 graduate students in more professional areas, all of these across eight colleges or schools of Arts and Sciences, Science and Engineering, Business, Education, Nursing, Law, Theology and Ministry, and Matteo Ricci College. Six hundred of our students are international students, coming to us from other countries, the majority from Asia.

There are approximately 650 faculty and 700 staff at Seattle University for an overall ratio of 13 students for each professor, and 6 students per faculty and staff combined. U.S. universities are extraordinarily developed in their facilities programs and services to their students and so demand high levels of personnel. 2,100 of our students live on campus in residence halls. Our budget for a year is about \$210 million. The typical total cost for a student, all things considered and with all financial aid received, is about \$30,000 a year. I am assisted in overseeing all of this by eleven vice presidents.

We are situated on a beautiful 53-acre (21.5 hectares), quite modern campus perched on a hill on the edge of the skyscrapers of downtown Seattle with views on a clear day of snow-capped mountain ranges beyond our bays and lakes. We draw much of our strength and character as a university from the metropolis of Seattle with its culture, music, entrepreneurial spirit, progressive and ecological values, its energy as a trade center toward Asia, and the vibrancy of such companies as Microsoft, Amazon.com, Starbucks, and Boeing. In effect we are one of the youngest, most vibrant, most future-focused, best-educated, and most beautiful cities in our country. It is a great city for our university and our students. It significantly shapes the kind of Jesuit university we are as Managua shapes you. We are also in a city and region of the United States which is the least religious. Of all 28 Jesuit universities in our country, we have the lowest percentage of Catholics, at 30%, but we believe we have the strongest Jesuit identity of them all.

Our students come to us because they want an urban university experience, a highly diverse student body of progressive and inclusive environment. A university engaged in the issues of the day with a clear commitment to service and justice, a globally engaged institution, and a place

1) Getting the mission right

Everyone who visits Seattle University, whether as part of an accreditation team, or applying for a position, or as consultants for various initiatives, exclaims on how pervasive our mission is throughout the universities and in all persons, whether faculty, staff, students, advisory boards, or recent alumni. We are not only mission-oriented, but mission-driven and mission-animated. How did this come about and what difference does it make?

When I came to our university as its president we had an 8-page, single-spaced mission statement which was highly polished, philosophically elegant, all-unmemorable. The trustees, coming from the corporate world and with their way of focusing their businesses, challenged us to come up with a clear, one-sentence mission statement, which would truly guide the university. At first I resisted them but then set about to try it, demanding that it not be the product of a committee but that I remain its author and give it a personal voice. I sat down and gave it a try, then over the course of a whole year, brought back version after repeatedly-improved version to one group of the university after another, thirty groups in all, in listening sessions which led to honing, to rewriting, and eventually to the statement approved by the Board of T

is dedicated to educating the whole person, to professional formation, and to empowering leaders for a just and huma from living, committed people.

We then almost literally nailed the mission statement to the wall at the entrance to every building on campus, put it on every document or communication, found it big surprise! on every request from divisions of the university for funds, recruited students with it, raised money

about where it came from, its credibility, its energy, and the persistence in its use that has made it the true, operative, and effective statement of our mission as a Jesuit university. So the first get the mission right

2) **The new era of lay Jesuit educational leadership**

The biggest challenge of all in making the mission real in a Jesuit university from my experience who ll now carry the Jesuit mission. (By the way, I use rather than institution is more than inspired by Ignatian spirituality as anyone or anything can be, but has a definite shape from a long education

If we are serious about who will lead our Jesuit universities and are committed to how lay people can do this in a faithful, yet new and promising way by making it their own, we have to be serious in funding, staffing, and in being creative in developing programs of both widespread and deeper formation in what makes Jesuit education to be Jesuit. This second stone is a very big one, the heaviest of all. We are interested in learning what you do here in Managua in this regard and seeing what we can together share and can learn from one another. I hope you have caught this stone which I have sent your way!

3) More by contact than by concept

In regard to actualizing the Jesuit mission in our universities, I have learned that it does not

Behind every Jesuit university is an academic core or set of principles, however it is embodied, which is the great, great grandchild of the *ratio studiorum* of Jesuit education from five centuries

5) Jesuit is easy; Catholic is hard

The final stone is actually not all that smooth and it fails to reach its target. What I want to say is that though it is relatively easy to promote the Jesuit mission and that it is widely and enthusiastically embraced by all at our university, it is extremely difficult to promote or at times even to get a hearing for the Catholic mission of our university. Is this issue familiar to you?

I learned fifteen years ago that if you give your faculty and staff (and even your students) a vote about how much they would want to enhance the Jesuit character of their university and how much they would support the Catholic character, they would strongly vote to strengthen the Jesuit aspect and would not move the needle on the dial of the Catholic dimension Jesuit, yes; Catholic, not so sure about how much success we have had. The issue may be different for us living in the most progressive and least religious city in the United States from what it is for you. In the US some people are

Catholic as a whole. People in the US like Catholic charity and service to the poor. They like the focus on strengthening families. But they are rejecting the way the Catholic church guides other parts of their lives like family planning and other things which have become controversial to many people.

But I would bet that there is some significant way in which this challenge of making the Catholic mission real also shows its head among you.

which will allow us to get beyond the hot button moral and usually sexual issues with which the Church is identified and which block most of our faculty, staff, and students from seeing the positive, rich, deep, important, critically-needed dimensions of our full Catholic reality, of which the Jesuit mission is one very attractive expression. ly about critiques we

receive from our bishops about our Catholic character as a university, though we have those; talking more about how I and other Jesuits and Catholics of our faculty and staff are concerned about how we retain our Catholic identity. We have a Catholic dimension inserted in the core curriculum, we have a vibrant campus ministry and sacramental life; and we have a new Institute

for Catholic Thought and Culture. However, our purchase academically, educationally, and formationally on our Catholic mission and character is slippery. What can we learn in our partnership about

begin. We believe we have already started in many different ways over many years with mutual visits and explorations

result of the work, the commitment, and the creativity of staff. Because of the wide variety of their ways of leadership and service and in practice of the shaping of our universities they are not as easily evaluated or described as are faculty. I am confident though that their contribution to the relationship of our two universities and how they will be affected by it will be both critical to the reality of our partnership and significant for them.

We want your professors to teach our students on our campus, and we want our faculty to teach your students on your campus. I am sure we each have professors specialized in certain areas and with particular intellectual passions which we cannot match separately. If we can start small and can manage the language hurdle perhaps also at times through teaching in our own language on the other campus how much richer can our

Let me conclude by asking, can our partnership make our universities themselves different? I believe it can in the more obvious ways of learning from one another how our universities are structured and function and allowing this knowledge to open us to consider new ways to act. I wish, however, to ask the question of whether our partnership can make our universities different at a more fundamental level.

Seattle University is not currently aligned with any other university in a special or unique way,

I am delighted to commit to our partnership today on behalf of Seattle University and together with our delegation. I look forward to signing with Fr. Chepe the agreement between our two universities. I again extend my congratulations to him and I express my confidence in his leadership of your university. I am so grateful for your welcome here in Managua, I invite you to come to Seattle, and I trust in a future which will require the work of us all and the Holy Spirit working within our collegueship and friendship.