President’s Report to the Community

President Tom Foley
September 27, 2013

This report consists of three sections: an opening essay summarizing some highlights of the summer, a baker’s dozen of activities in the last quarter and finally the State of the College address which outlines progress in the last year and challenges for the next.

We had a busier-than-usual summer at the College:

- Two (instead of the usual one) summer theology seminars. The new addition was a well-attended Thomas Merton Seminar held in July.
- Second edition of Pennsylvania State Police Camp Cadet, numbers for participating 12 to 16-year olds were up from last year’s 30 to 48 this year. [Tribune Democrat Article] | [Camp Cadet Video]
- Our traditional two summer basketball camps brought over 300 young people onto the campus, and saw more Mounties from our women’s team serving as instructors. [Summer Basketball Camp Video]
- Thirty visitors from Belfast, Northern Ireland were on campus for a week in June. [Altoona Mirror Article] | [President Foley Interviews Irish Coaches Video]
- Another 8% increase in summer school attendance, still not a big number overall but consistent growth these last three summers.
- Our rejuvenated Alumni Weekend with another 200 people from over 30 different graduating classes came back to Mount Aloysius for a diverse 3-day program of inter-activity. [Alumni Weekend Video] | [Alumni Weekend Photo Gallery]
- A whole raft of physical and technology upgrades/repairs/scheduled maintenance across the campus from new (and even “smarter”) Smart Boards to better (as in “modern”) plumbing retrofits. [Construction and Tech Upgrades from this year’s State of the College]

Of course, the really big news coming out of the summer is that the Athletic Convocation and Wellness Center (ACWC) is ahead of schedule, under budget and will be open for full seasons of basketball and volleyball this year. We expect to move our Athletic Department, the Department of Institutional Advancement and most of our Business Faculty to the ACWC in October. We will host a grand opening later in the spring when we are “guaranteed” good weather and when we will have finished all the internal artwork. I don’t think anyone has come through a tour of the building yet without their jaw dropping at some point, and our ACWC Chief Engineer Ralph tells me that it has provoked tears from some of the visiting Sisters (and himself, in their company). [Mainliner Article] | [Timelapse of ACWC Floor Installation]
Finally, after a year on *Civil Discourse* (and a monograph of that series now in the Library of Congress) and a second year on *Hospitality: Finding Home in a Changing World*, our third Speaker Series (and all-College focus) will be on *Twenty-First Century Citizenship: The Common Good*.

- Our orientation for new students began with a provocative reading (and small group discussion) on the notion of “common good”. Read it here
- I kicked off the theme in the State of the College address with a historical reprise on the battle between individual wants and community needs going back to the Greeks (read them here) and
- We are excited that six outstanding speakers are coming to Mount Aloysius to discuss the topic with us.

The first speaker on the theme was Trustee and Judge David C. Klementik who gave us a very useful definition of and perspective on citizenship at the 2013 Convocation. The reception, dinner and conversation that followed was a seminar all on its own. He will be followed by a Justice of the PA Superior Court, a four-time European Ambassador, the Librarian of Congress, a former President of this institution and a long-time aide to the Vice President of the United States. Video Highlights | Judge Klementik’s Remarks

**BAKER’S DOZEN OF HIGHLIGHTS**

1. **New student “orientation magic”**—our 600 new students on campus this fall were treated to an expedited registration, a formal welcome, a parents send-off, comedians, hypnotists, community activities (both local services and Haiti-bound goods) and even a magician—all designed to welcome them in true Mount Aloysius spirit (but also keep them busy in those first few days when memories of home are strongest). Thanks to Elaine Grant, Chris Koren, Dr. Jane Grassadonia and an outstanding group of student orientation leaders and resident assistants who organize all the action. Move-In Day 2013 Video | WTAJ Coverage | TPF Remarks
2. **New Mount Aloysius publications**—three recent publications are attracting very positive comments. The *Alumni Magazine*, with a 2013 graduation cover photo including the Rooneys, Chair Rullo, and others, had special pieces on the year in hospitality, the December and May graduations and a MAC-by-the-Numbers page. *The Year in Photos*, a compilation of student and communications team photos covering each month and edited by Sam Wagner, has the feel of an annual report and has come in for much praise—some beautiful perspectives on the campus, and such a variety of engaged students and smiles. *The Year in Hospitality* reprises five outstanding lectures from our Speaker Series, and will be of much interest to our colleagues in the Mercy world. Thanks to Jack Coyle, Sam Wagner and their team of student photogs. [Alumni Magazine | Year in Photos | Year in Hospitality]

3. **New common “reader” for first-year students**—for the first time all first-year students will be reading a single book which will be referenced throughout the traditional Cultural Literacy Seminar (now called “Connections”) classes. The book is a critically acclaimed Barbara Kingsolver novel, *Flight Behavior*, and traces the education of a mature want-to-be student and her extended family. The novel contains equal doses of dialogue, character and plot developments that will allow our professors to discuss *Civil Discourse to Hospitality to the Role of Citizens in the 21st Century* in contexts that will have meaning for these students. This is a first attempt to teach the required seminar in this way and we are grateful to Professor Michael Jones, Dr. Fulop and others who have worked on this advancement to our curriculum.

4. **Camp Cadet**—was a rousing success, growing to 48 young people this year. The young cadets were at all times disciplined and generally inquisitive, turning their attention from equine behavior to forensic science and much more during their work week. Both local newspapers gave it substantial coverage as well as did local television stations. Their stories are attached here. Thanks to Suzanne Campbell and Bill Trexler and their teams, who make sure it all runs smoothly. [Tribune Democrat Article | Camp Cadet Video]

5. **The Spirit of Catherine McAuley**—Mount Aloysius continues to build links to the country of its founders. Four faculty members from Mount Aloysius lectured at the Carlow Conference held May 26-June 2 in Dublin, Ireland, integrating Mercy traditions with their own academic interests. **Dr. Tom Coakley**, Professor of English and Fine Arts, presented a talk entitled *"Literature and the Light: Reading in a Mercy Context,"* **Dr. Sara Rutledge**, Associate Professor of Education, presented on *"Integrating Service-Learning into a Standards-Based Teacher Education Program at a Mercy Institution,"* **Dr. Patricia Meintel**, Assistant Professor of Nursing, presented on *"Faculty and Staff Perceptions of the Methodology of Service-Learning,"* and **Dr. Laura Lansing**, Assistant Professor of Psychology, presented on *"Mercy Values Promote Integrity in the Classroom and Beyond."* As well, twenty-five young people and five counselor/coaches from Belfast spent a week on this side of the Atlantic here at the College participating in our June basketball camp, learning about the history of the college and the Sisters of Mercy and giving us a genuine lesson on hospitality on their way out the door on Friday morning. They participated in a wide array of activities at the college, especially the basketball camp (where they produced six All-Stars) and were stars in the local media as well. [Altoona Mirror Article | President Foley Interviews Irish Coaches Video]
6. **Mount Aloysius nursing faculty pursue Ph.D.’s**—career Navy nurse and MAC Associate Dean of Nursing Dr. Becky Zukowski successfully defended her dissertation entitled “A Quantitative Study Identifying Adaptive Capacity and Its Impact on Response and Recovery in Communities Affected by Major Disaster” and her Ph.D. was conferred on August 15, 2013. Nursing faculty Joan Krug and Heather Zonts were accepted into the Ph.D. program at Indiana University of Pennsylvania, joining colleagues Nicole Custer and Margaret Boyce (also enrolled in nursing doctoral programs) and Drs. Bonnie Noll and Patricia Meintel, who received their doctorates last year (each without missing a single class here). We had one doctoral degree in 2010—three on staff now, and four more on the way.

7. **New Technology upgrades crosslink campus**—IT Department worked hard all summer to implement new equipment, update older systems and in general “sync up” our various communications technology systems across the campus. A “top ten” list of improvements appears here. Thanks to Suzanne Campbell, Rich Shea and their team for helping to fulfill part of the Mount Aloysius compact (to deliver job ready, community ready and technology ready graduates). [Technology Upgrades from this year’s State of the College](#)

8. **New Associate Dean for Humanities and Social Sciences**—Dr. Dave Haschak who left an 11-year private sector life as a practicing therapist to join Mount Aloysius as its college counselor, is serving as our interim Associate Dean. Dave moved up the ranks in the last seven years here, getting four stars at every level. He started as a counselor, taught to rave reviews in the Psychology Department, began our Graduate Counseling Master’s Degree Program (which graduated its first class in 2013), serves on numerous significant college committees (including the Presidential Search Committee and the Middle States Review team) and has been a real contributor in and around the campus. He’s well known to his colleagues as well to the students here and so far has left a very positive impression on both in his new capacity. Thanks for the outstanding work of those who joined me on the search committee (Dean Fulop, Associate Deans Farcus and Zukowski, Senior VP Campbell, Professor Coakley, HR Director Gordon) which produced this excellent choice.
9. **MAC students perform very well on National Criminology and Business Exams**—Mount Aloysius students were at the very top of the Criminology exams with two students scoring in the 97th and 98th percentile and the group as a whole finishing in the 89% percentile of students from among 220 schools offering a Criminology major. Similarly, our business students who competed in the National Capsim Business Strategy exams finished in the 96th and 97th percentile nationally. Congratulations to our business and criminology faculty and to our students.

10. **MAC students do exceedingly well on State Nursing Exams**—for the fourth testing period in a row over the last two academic years Mount Aloysius nursing students have passed the state NCLEX exam at a 90+% rate, the highest in the last decade. Nursing Chair Associate Dean (and newly-crowned Ph.D.) Rebecca Zukowski will again be preparing a steak and lobster dinner for the nursing faculty at her home (a promise she once again made if they were able to again deliver that pass-rate from among our graduates). This year Michele and I have offered to help serve the dinner as well. Thanks to our outstanding nursing faculty and our hard-working students for these results.

11. **New cafeteria approach (and in some cases new foods) greets returning students**—food “bars” with special offerings (potato bar, sushi bar, taco bar, pasta bar, salad bar, etc.) set up in different sections of the Cosgrave have made for more diverse, interesting and healthy choices for students. This is the first part of a remake of the cafeteria which we negotiated with our food service provider this summer. Stage two will occur between semesters. Generally rave reviews.

12. **Mount Aloysius students at top of charts in State Exams**—passing rates were 100% for Early Childhood and Elementary Education, as well as for Medical Lab Technicians, 95% for Radiology Technicians and 89% for Surgical Technicians. All excellent results for our students, so many of whom work at least a part-time job while going through school and clinicals here. Congratulations to our Education Chair Dr. Marilyn Roseman and her team and to Health Sciences Associate Dean Paul Farcus and his faculty for these results.

13. **“Theology Summer School” growing**—with our sixth Summer Scripture Institute (June) and a first-time Merton Seminar (July). Drs. Bonnie Thurston and Marie Noel Keller, RSM, engaged twenty-one participants in a study of “Acts of the Apostles: the Who and the How”. Ministers and lay leaders from a variety of Christian churches enjoyed fruitful exchange of insights as well as the beauty of our campus. Thirty-four participants enrolled for a first-time offering of a Merton Seminar led by Dr. Bonnie Thurston. Thanks to Sister Helen Marie who handles all of the on-campus arrangements for both events. Summer Scripture Institute program

14. **Alumni Weekend**. Over 160 alumni attended including alumni, their families, volunteers and staff. Special celebrations were held for the Class of ’63 alumni celebrating their 50th anniversary – our Golden Grads. In addition, the Alumni Association presented Distinguished Alumni awards to five graduates at the All Class Dinner on Saturday. Thanks to VP Jennifer Dubuque and her team for an extraordinarily busy weekend. Other highlights included:
• Mount Aloysius Past/Present/Future Panel Discussion, moderated by Jack Coyle with Sister Charlene, students John Moist and Kate, Professor Mingyar, alumni Pat Gildea and myself.

• Healthcare Seminar – “Cardiovascular Disease: Statistics, Awareness & Health Promotion,” where nurses earned 1 CEU.

• Game show, “Minute to Win It” competition with Sr. Charlene Kelly being one of the best there is at the game, beating out students and alumni alike.

• Alumni Art Exhibit in Cosgrave Lobby showcasing the talent of our very own graduates.

Please review the State of the College Address which further outlines progress in the last year and challenges for the next, here.