President’s Report to the Community

President Tom Foley
October 2, 2015

There are three parts to this President’s Report to the Community:

1. An Introduction
2. A Baker’s Dozen of highlights from the last few months
3. The Fall 2015 State of the College Address (appended)

Part One: Introduction

Welcome to this fall edition of the President’s Report to the Community. Let me begin with three very recent highlights.

First, Mount Aloysius College got a shout out from the White House when it released its long awaited Scorecard on higher education. Though the data is still incomplete in many ways and not reflective of the full picture at institutions like Mount Aloysius, the official White House press release took time to praise Mount Aloysius as one of four “engines of opportunity” among the 7,000 rated institutions—singling out the college for our work to make college affordable for low income students. The other institutions were SUNY-Albany, UC-Irvine and Lake Area Technical College in South Dakota (where the President gave the commencement address last May). Mount Aloysius was the only private college to make the list. I attach here the official release from the White House. White House Release

Needless to say, this mention from the press office at the White House resulted in the College’s name appearing in hundreds of news and television stories across the nation, (including 159 mentions just on the Saturday September 12 after the late afternoon Friday release). Congratulations to all who have worked over so many years to keep our costs relatively low at Mount Aloysius. List of Mount Aloysius mentions | Money/CNN story I also attach here the testimony that I delivered on the Scorecard proposal on two occasions in the last year. It is heartening to know that someone was paying attention in Washington, as we made the case for the special mission that is Mount Aloysius College. White House testimony | Second White House testimony
The second highlight has been the kickoff of our annual theme this year. At both Convocation and Constitution Day, we were treated to first rate perorations on the subject of Voice. Dr. Dan Porterfield, President of Franklin & Marshall College (and a frequent commentator on higher education in Forbes and The Huffington Post), gave us a nice four part recipe for helping to develop voice among our students. He also told us the remarkable story of his own mother, Anne Butler—who earned her B.A. in her late 20’s, M.A. in her 30’s, Ph.D. in her 40’s, and published her first book in her 50’s—Across God’s Frontiers: Catholic Sisters in the American West, 1850-1920 (with a chapter on the Mercys!!). Porterfield’s citation | Porterfield’s speech | TPF remarks | Convocation Program | Convocation highlight video

Trustee Vice-Chairman Mike McLanahan closed the ceremony by introducing another amazing voice who just happened to be in our audience that day—his 98 year-old Mother-in-law. Four years ago, Erna wrote and published the story of her escape from oppression during World War II. Her book has given voice to many thousands who were not fortunate enough to escape. She got a standing ovation from the 700+ in attendance.

Constitution Day brought another memorable address on Voice, Pulitzer- Prize Winner David Shribman’s careful analysis of ten past Presidential speeches—which he combed for insights into the politics of today. As good as his prepared text was, the editor of the Post-Gazette was even better in extended Q&A with the 180 people in attendance. It was a high level presentation and discussion and a nice commemoration of Constitution Day on our campus. Shribman’s remarks | TPF remarks | Constitution Day Highlight video

Both of these events followed on a number of other fine efforts to introduce the idea of voice to our students this year:

✓ At Orientation, over 500 first-year students read and discussed a piece on immigrant voices; they learned about the power of community service to develop and sustain voice; and they all laughed at a six-character skit that explored one new student’s efforts to find her voice as a newbie on a college campus.

✓ During the first week of classes, our students watched a movie about using one’s a capella voice to find their personal voice, created theme spaces in their dorms about voice and even tried out their voices at karaoke night.
In our Connections classes, the first day was focused on discussion about a seminal article on voice in the 21st century, and all our first-year students will be exploring the theme as they read *The Book of Unknown Americans* this semester.

In the Library, there are monthly displays tied to the theme. Our Little People’s Place sent me a giant card to introduce their voices, and there is even a discussion planned around a Steelers game about how professional athletes have learned to use their voices to advocate on issues like concussion and long term health.

At Convocation, we also heard about voices of courage—Mairead, Mandela and Malala, from Northern Ireland, South Africa and Pakistan—whose young lives were not all that dissimilar from many of our students.

And our newest art exhibit in the ACWC, curated by our own Dr. Don Talbot, considers the subject of *The Heart’s Voice*. This is the fourth exhibit in our series on *Arts for Healing*.

So this is where we all begin this academic year—with a focus on authentic voices. And a big part of our job here at Mount Aloysius is to help these students find and develop that authentic voice which is theirs alone.

Finally, we are looking forward to celebrating Alumni/Family/ Homecoming weekend with over twenty different events, the most important of which will be the dedication of the new Bertschi Center and Technology Commons. Thanks in part to the generosity of an anonymous donor, the college was able to convert the old gymnasium into a very modern technology commons which would have made Sister Ginny Bertschi proud. Sister May Ann Dillon and Trustee Joe Sheetz will deliver remarks on the day and we look forward to recognizing the work of Sister Mary Ann’s key partner (and good friend) during here long year tenure at Mount Aloysius College. [Bertschi Center & Tech Commons Dedication program](#) | [Alumni Weekend schedule](#)
BAKER’S DOZEN OF HIGHLIGHTS

1. Dr. Porterfield Delivers Outstanding Convocation Address on “Voice”—Dr. Dan Porterfield, President of Franklin & Marshall, nationally respected higher education leader (one of few College Presidents invited to speak at both White House Summits last year), frequent contributor to Forbes and the Huffington Post, and a Rhodes Scholar, delivered the 76th Convocation Address on September 8th. He sprinkled lines from essays by Mount Aloysius students liberally throughout his remarks about Voice. Dan encouraged our students to find their own voices, offered some tips on how to form and develop those voices and exhorted them to use their voices both while at college and when they leave here. It was the perfect opening to our theme this year on the subject of “Voice”. Thanks to Jack Coyle and Sam Wagner for this excellent short video which is attached. Porterfield’s citation | Porterfield speech | TPF remarks | Sr. Mary Ellen Fuhrman’s Benediction | Convocation Program | Convocation highlight video

2. Mount Aloysius on Statewide TV—the Pennsylvania Cable Network (PCN) broadcast two recent events filmed on our campus: an hour long interview I did in our Digital Grotto with Dr. Timothy Shriver and Guido Calabresi’s outstanding Commencement address (one of four graduation addresses PCN chose from the entire state). Some of you were able to attend Tim's remarks as our 9th Annual Moral Choices Lecture in April—we taped the interview that appeared on PCN that afternoon. Dr. Shriver and Judge Calabresi both addressed our yearlong campus theme of “The Good Life” and offered powerful testimonies on the topic. Digital Grotto Conversation with Tim | Guido Calabresi speech

3. Mount Aloysius Faculty/Staff Journey to Mercy International Center in Dublin, Ireland—Business Department Chair Kim Asonevich (whose husband, President of Penn Highlands Community College, joined her on the trip), Amber Lenhard who holds two degrees from the Mount (including her MBA) and teaches Medical Imaging at the College (and whose husband was one of the four Mercy Spirit Award winners last year) and our Director of Campus Ministry Andrea Cecilli together attended the bi-annual event for Mercy College faculty members in Dublin. All three raved about their experience as we continue to build connections in the country of our origins. Mercy International Center website

4. Mercy Week In Full Bloom—besides our typical program of a Comfortable Cup of Tea (and scones) on Tuesday morning and an All College Liturgy on Thursday afternoon, the College this year is devoting one day of Mercy Week to each of the five areas identified as critical concern by the
Sisters of Mercy here in the US—nonviolence, women, immigration, anti-racism and earth. Executive Director for Mission Integration and Community Engagement Christina Koren and her team have put together a series of activities and discussions to mark each concern and have included for the first time local Mercy Associates—all designed to honor the legacy of the Sisters here at the Mount. **Mercy Week poster**

5. **Mounties Excel at State and National Exams**—Our **Criminology students** continue to shine in national testing, with an average score at the 90th percentile on the most recent national exam. In the **Capsim Business honors competition**, our Business/Accounting program saw four of six MAC teams finish in the top quartile of nearly 2,000 collegiate teams competing globally in the **Capsim Capstone strategy simulation**. In other health fields, Mounties finished the year with a 100% pass rate in the most recent state exams for **EKG Techs**, **Phlebotomy Techs**, **Ultrasound Techs** and **Medical Imaging**. **Physical Therapy Assistant** grads have a pass rate of 90%, **Medical Lab Techs** and graduating **Surg Tech** students passed at an 86% rate (16 points ahead of the national benchmark), and 100% of our recent Surg Tech grads have found job placements. And finally our **Master’s students in counseling** again achieved a pass rate of 100% continuing our perfect record for the third year since the program’s inception. Congrats to faculty and students for these signature accomplishments!!

6. **Alumni/Family/Homecoming Weekend Around the Corner**—we are looking forward to celebrating October 2-4 with over twenty different events, the most important of which will be the dedication of the new Bertschi Center and Technology Commons. Thanks in part to the generosity of an anonymous donor, we have converted the old gymnasiun into a very modern technology commons which would have made Sister Ginny Bertschi proud. Sister May Ann Dillon and Trustee Joe Sheetz will deliver remarks on the day and we look forward to recognizing the work of Sister Mary Ann’s key partner (and good friend) during here long year tenure at Mount Aloysius College. Thanks to VP’s Dubuque and Grassadonia who have worked so well together planning this weekend. **Homecoming Schedule**

7. **White House Gives Kudos to Mount Aloysius College**—the US Department of Education released a 160-item (per school) data set on each of 7,000 institutions of higher education in September, to somewhat mixed reviews. [Inside Higher Education article](#) | [New York Times article](#) | [Maguire article](#). On the plus side, the White House also issued a press release on the subject, wherein they credited twelve schools with exceptional efforts in three different areas of education. Mount Aloysius was one of four schools (and the only private college) singled out for keeping costs down and serving a high proportion of low-income students. The other schools were publicly funded institutions in New York, California and South Dakota. The exact language appears here. [White House press release](#) | [CNN/Money article](#)
8. **Orientation as Busy as Ever**—with 515 residential students (our highest ever) and over 500 first-year students (one of our highest ever, Frank tells me), we had a busy first three weeks of the school session. Dr. Jane Grassadonia, Elaine Grant, Residence Life Director Matt Lovell and a host of others helped to organize twenty-two different events in the first three weeks of the semester to help orient the new arrivals, including an act from a comedy magician, a luau, an ice cream social, a hypnotist, an outdoor movie night, karaoke, video dance, another comedian, an outdoor bash, a comic book game night, a barbeque, a Cresson Playhouse trip and, of course, shopping trips to Altoona and to Wal-Mart. Thanks to all who helped organize this busiest time of the school year.

9. **Convocation Hits the Mark for 76th Time in our History**—Dr. Dan Porterfield’s message was moving, topical and a real Mount Aloysius tale. Mike McLanahan delivered closing remarks on behalf of the Trustees and introduced his 98-year-old mother-in-law, whose recent book gave voice to millions who suffered oppression during World War II. After Mike’s words, Erna received the first standing ovation from the 700+ in the audience. Both the opening prayer by Director of Campus Ministry Andrea Cecilli and the closing benediction by Trustee Sr. Mary Ellen Fuhrman commented on the idea of voice and some biblical representations of it. Sr. Mary Ellen got the second standing ovation of the day, when Mike McLanahan mentioned that this was her 50th anniversary as a Sister of Mercy. Dr. Pugliese and Adele Kupchella, with fellow trustees Mark Barnhart and Paul Calandra, helped bestow an honorary degree on Dr. Porterfield; and I delivered remarks christening our theme for this year, *Voice*. [Invocation](#) | [Benediction](#) | [TPF remarks](#)

10. **All Hands Were on Deck on for Fall Kickoff**—Monday August 17 began with the State of the College (see later in this report), and everyone with a job description here at College was engaged in some kind of learning opportunity in our now traditional Faculty/Staff Development Week. The week includes panel discussions (including the D.A. of Cambria County) on sexual assault and weapons policies, introduction to assessment for new faculty, an all-campus, “bring your family picnic” hosted this year by Senior VPs Steve and Suzanne. Special thanks to Dr. Pugliese who organized a really first-rate program. [Faculty/Staff Development program](#)
11. **Summer Journalism Camp Success, Thanks to the Shribman’s**—Cindy Skrzycki, for eighteen years the regulatory page editor of The Washington Post (who started her career as the editor of both her high school and college—Canisius—newspapers), organized a three-day journalism camp at Mount Aloysius for twelve lucky students, ten from local high schools and two from Mount Aloysius. It was a rigorous program of reading, writing, critiquing, presenting and discussion. Dr. Jess Jost-Costanzo, Dr. Michael Jones and Shamim Rajpar worked with Cindy throughout the three days. Her husband and fellow Mount Aloysius honorary degree recipient and Pulitzer-Prize Winner David Shribman delivered the remarks at the closing lunch (with WT AJ newscaster Carolyn Donaldson in attendance). David brought fifty copies of the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette with him, and walked us through all the decisions that went into preparing that particular edition of the paper. David (who now happily refers to Mount Aloysius as his second alma mater—Dartmouth is his first) and Cindy donated all of their time to the college. [WT AJ coverage](#) | [Mainliner article](#)

12. **Mount Aloysius Wins AMCC Dean’s Cup for Academic Performance**—the College received the highest academic honor from the Allegheny Mountain Collegiate Conference as our 180+ student-athletes in 14 NCAA sports brought home the Dean’s Cup for the second time in four years. Mount Aloysius earned the distinction of the Dean's Cup Award for landing the highest percentage of its varsity team members—55%—on the Academic All-Conference Team. A total of 94 Mount Aloysius student-athletes were named to the Academic All-Conference team by achieving a GPA of 3.2 or higher during 2014-2015. 57 of those 94 were also tabbed Individual Peak Performers by the conference for earning a GPA of 3.5 or higher. The Mount Aloysius baseball, men’s basketball and golf teams won Academic Peak Performer honors from the AMCC this year, meaning they posted the highest team GPAs in the ten team conference. Basketball also became the AMCC’s only three- time winner (and one of only 18 in the country) of the National Association of Basketball Coaches (NABC) team Academic Excellence Award. [Altoona Mirror Dean’s Cup article](#)

13. **Mount Aloysius Year on Voice in Full Swing**—besides opening addresses from Doctors Porterfield and Shribman, faculty and staff created and delivered a wide variety of activities designed to help our students find their own authentic voices. These activities included Orientation skits/readings/lectures, movie and karaoke voice-themed evenings, Connections classes readings and discussions, library displays, and even an art exhibit in the ACWC built around the idea of *The Heart’s Voice*. [My introduction for Shribman](#)
**14. New Trails/New Tennis Courts Open for Students and Community**—the new school year not only brought new faces to campus it brought our 1.9 mile 12-foot wide cross-campus trail into play—with four different entrances that invite access from the cemetery to the baseball field. One resident amateur ornithologist has identified 96 species of birds on the campus and we will shortly have handy cards for youngsters (and others) to check off the birds as they see them. Additionally, Dr. Merrilee Anderson is working on a similar display relative to the diversity of plant life on the campus grounds. The tennis courts are already a hit as the beautiful blue/green courts sit just above the baseball field (and up the path from the soccer and softball fields). Tennis, anyone?

**15. Summer of Remodeling V**—Senior VP for Administrative Affairs Suzanne Campbell and Director of Physical Plant and Maintenance Jerry Rubritz have set a fast pace in terms of improving and reinforcing structural elements of the campus each summer. This year the focus has been on the basement of Old Main which you honestly won’t recognize when you have a chance to look at it. The only thing still in place is Our Lady of the Pipes, a statue deposited there many years ago (nestled between pipes that descend from the ceiling) — hence the name. Most of this refurbishing and remodeling around campus is on a schedule that Suzanne and Jerry created and most importantly we’ve been able to accomplish all of it within budget.

**16. Science Prof Again Makes International News**—Dr. John Whitlock, our 2nd year Biology Prof with a Ph.D from Michigan is again in world-wide news for his work in the field of paleontology. John has spread the name of Mount Aloysius far and wide and we are grateful (though we recognize we actually have nothing to do with the expertise that has allowed John to be the subject of these articles!!). [Brontosaurus article](#)

**17. Nursing Program Receives More Accolades**—Nurse Journal wrote to me last month to let us know that the college’s nursing program had been recognized as one of the premier programs in the state. This is the first time Nursing Journal has decided to rank these nursing programs and we are delighted that the recognition was so decisive. Representing fully 35% of our total student body (far more grads than our closest area competitors), our 2015 MAC nurses state exam pass rate exceeded 92%. That is just excellent, and the fourth year in a row (and eighth straight testing period) where our overall rate will exceed 90%. That pass rate competes with and surpasses the rate for many institutions whose incoming classes carry far higher average SAT and ACT scores and exceeds both the state and national averages by 12%. Thanks to nursing faculty and hardworking students alike! [Mainliner Nursing article](#)
18. New Executive Director for Mission Integration Off and Running—Christina Koren has already led a number of early initiatives in this important position for the college, including: 1) creating the Frances Xavier Warde conference room in Old Main; 2) upgrading our community service online reporting system; 3) designing and finding the finance ($20,000 from the Community Foundation of the Alleghenies), for a summer tri-county high school leadership program; 4) becoming the first Mount Aloysius staff member ever to participate in the Cambria County Leadership Program (where my sources tell me she is already a star); and 5) generally bringing more visibility to the work and mission of that office (she’s even created yard signs that our students can post that say “service project underway—Mounties in action”). Grant article

19. Cambria County DA Leads Panel Discussion on Campus Safety—as part of the opening day for faculty and staff training and development this year, DA Kelly Callihan and Senior VP for Administrative Affairs Suzanne Campbell led a discussion for all our faculty and staff on the issues surrounding last academic year’s incident with the young man who brought loaded weapons onto campus. As you may remember, the young man was eventually charged for a separate incident later that same week, when he discharged a different weapon in the Cathedral in Altoona. Suzanne led an analysis of campus security and will make a recommendation to me soon on exactly how we will move forward in terms of our own security forces and their weapons. With Dr. Jane Grassadonia, they also updated our team on the latest and expected changes in federal and state law/regulations on sexual assaults and Title IX issues. We are grateful every day for the professionals who help maintain our status as the safest campus in the region.

20. Camp Cadet 4th Year Success—Mount Aloysius was host to the Cambria County version of Pennsylvania State Police summer camp with fifty-four 14-16 year old on campus for weeklong exercises. We were also visited by troopers on horseback, real live bears and a digital forensics unit. Good TV and news coverage for the college. Kudos to Suzanne Campbell and her team for handling every single detail for this week long event. Camp Cadet article | Summer Kid Opportunities article

21. NCAA Semi-finalist for Woman of the Year—Mackenzie Horne ’15, who finished her degree (3.93) here in just three years (while captaining the soccer team for two of them), served as a work study in the security department, worked as a research assistant for visiting scholar ambassador Jim Sharkey and led her classmates as an editor and writer on the school paper, was named one of 230 finalists for this prestigious NCAA honor, one of three from among the 2,000 plus female student athletes in the AMCC conference. High and well-deserved honor for Mackenzie—the Altoona Mirror carried the story in the attached clip. Congratulations Mackenzie and thanks to all her mentors at the College. Mac Horne story
22. Belfast Visitors End Up in MSG—eight basketball playing young ladies (and two coaches) traveled over 3500 miles from Northern Ireland to Mount Aloysius and spent a week at one of our three summer basketball camps. The Northern Irish group was a 14-16 year old all-star team, coached by a former captain of the Irish National Women’s Team (who in her day played against our Senior Vice President for Advancement Jennifer Dubuque). Our connection goes back 30 years to my time as a peace volunteer in Belfast, when I played basketball (and ran sports clinics) with Coach Breda’s husband Francis. The Belfast b-ballers left the college Thursday (after one of Michele’s blueberry pancake breakfasts) and by Sunday afternoon were playing at Madison Square Garden prior to a WNBA professional game. Northern Ireland Host article

23. Two Mount Softball Players Named Academic All-Americans—Alexandria Teeter and Sarah Forbes were named National Fastpitch Coaches Association (NFCA) All-American Scholar-Athletes for their prowess on and off the diamond for the Mounties. Teeter, a sophomore first baseman, hit .352 in 37 starts while leading the team with 28 RBI's and 43 hits. Teeter has a 3.64 GPA as an education major. Forbes hit .250 on the season, including a three-hit performance in a win over Franciscan and recorded a 3.55 GPA in her first semester as an accounting major at Mount Aloysius. The National Fastpitch Coaches Association is the professional organization for fastpitch softball coaches from all competitive levels of play.

24. Busy Summer for Sports Camps, Thanks to ACWC—Mount Aloysius hosted 380 kids at basketball camps this summer, largest number ever, from 56 different school districts and 3 states. The camps also included campers all the way from Belfast, Northern Ireland who were making their second trip to Mount Aloysius. The ACWC effectively tripled our available indoor court space. The summer volleyball league went for six weeks from June-August with twenty-seven teams, 300 participants from six counties. We also ended up hosting PIAA Class A baseball state semifinal as well as the PIAA Class 4A softball state semifinal—both firsts for the college. Thanks to Coaches Loya and Baker, who do the lion’s share of the work on these camps, and to all our athletic and maintenance staff who make it work.

25. Mountie Baseball Players Tearing Up Summer Leagues—Mount Aloysius Connor Bowie ’16 (3.8 GPA), who has been on a hitting tear in the New York Collegiate Baseball League this summer, was chosen for the Eastern Division All-Star Roster for the league’s All-Star game. Bowie has been playing for the Sherrill Silversmiths. Mercy Presidential Scholar (and shortstop) Ian Helsel (3.9 GPA) was named MVP of the Johnstown All-American Amateur Baseball Association (AAABA) League as a member of the Martella's Pharmacy team. Both of these honors are firsts for the Mount Aloysius baseball program.
I am attaching below the most recent State of the College Address delivered to faculty and staff during our August Development Week. It includes some comments on what keeps me up at night as a college president, on the demands of keeping pace with the technology of education, on staying focused on lifelong learning (and not just job training) skills and, finally, on the role of higher education in responding to mass shootings on our campuses and in our communities. I hope you find these reflections provocative and relevant.

Thank you for all your support at this most exciting time in the Mount Aloysius calendar—new faces, new classes, new hope... let’s all have another great year at Mount Aloysius!

All the best,

Thomas P. Foley
President
Mount Aloysius College
Welcome back to this 163rd year of education at Mount Aloysius. It is truly that long since seven Sisters of Mercy showed up here in the Southern Allegheny Mountains and it is quite remarkable not only that we are still here—all these years later—but we are still so focused on mission, as those Sisters were seventeen decades ago.

Let us start this State of the College Address with a look back at our highly successful 2014-2015 academic year. There are people that I need to thank for their great work last year and want to take a few moments to do that in the first part of this year’s State of the College address.

Secondly, I would like to offer some reflections—after five years on this job—on what keeps me up at night, when I think about Mount Aloysius and the journey we are all on here together.

Finally, I’d like to take a look ahead and discuss briefly the future of the college that we are working together to shape.

Let me get right to the first topic with the review of last year and let me break that review up into three crisp highlights: some comments about what I’m going to call “trifectas”; some reflections on all the excitement of the late spring semester; and three, a final word about the sheer volume of work that you all completed in this last academic year.

Let’s begin again.
I. REVIEW OF 2014-15

TRIFECTAS

Last spring, late in our academic calendar, I received a phone call from a former President and Trustee of the College, who left me a message that had something to do with a “winning the trifecta.” I had to think for a second about what a trifecta is, returned his call and asked him exactly what he meant. Jim had read our S&P ratings promotion (to the full “A”) in a financial newsletter for higher education. In Jim’s mind, one of his favorite institutions (Mount Aloysius) had just completed his version of the trifecta—Mercy (CMHE) Accreditation, Middle States (MSCHE) Accreditation and a full “A” rating from S&P—all in just a six month period.

As Jim said, “it doesn’t get much better than that.” And while we are happy about all three milestones, we were especially grateful to receive our MSCHEx draft report that required no/none/zip/nada interim or follow-up reports. Now I have to tell you that when our Site Team Chair met with the full Middle States board, they still insisted that we write to them in 2016 on the six assessment recommendations that we included in our Self-Study. And we will. Bottom line, we are one of only 33 institutions to get approved on all 14 standards of excellence, as indicated in the accompanying graph. MSCHE 14—15 Cycle Report

More than two—thirds of institutions in this MSCHE cycle got dinged—technical term for “reprimanded in some way.” We were not one of them. Dr. Drugovich’s presentation to the MSCHE full board in Philadelphia in late June was described by our MSCHE liaison as, in a word (and it was her word), “glowing.”

So the first order of business in this State of the College report is congratulations—to staff, faculty, trustees and all who had a hand in these three signature achievements for Mount Aloysius. I want to single out a few folks who went above and beyond on Middle States.

First our chapter authors—Dr. Jane Grassadonia, Dr. Barbara Cook, Dr. Jess Jost—Costanzo and Dr. Merrilee Anderson. These four and Dr. Becky Zukowski, took on the arduous task of compiling a first draft on the 14 standards, perhaps the single most weekend-consuming step in the whole process. Please stand and be recognized. On behalf of all your colleagues at Mount Aloysius, I thank you.
Second, our editing team—our self-study Chair and Director of our Library, Dr. Michael Jones, who took all five chapters and reorganized them paragraphically to suit the language in the standards of excellence document—that is how Michael spent the summer of 2014. And our technical team, Dr. Sara Rutledge and IT Director Rich Shea. Sara created the first draft of our 700+ document digital library and Rich gave up his nights and weekends in January to tune it all up—with Steve and I sitting in front of the giant screen parsing Rich’s every keystroke to be sure it produced our desired result.

Last but certainly not least, a special thank-you needs to go out to our assessment gurus. Led by Dr. Virginia Gonsman for most of the last ten years, our Institutional Researcher Bryan Pearson and our Registrar Dr. Chris Lovett have played a major and continuing role in all our evaluations by outside entities. If you have any doubt about their impact on our final product, you need only know that Dr. Drugovich (our Site Team chair) shook only four hands the morning of her glowing exit report. One was mine. But she went out of her way at the close of the exit presentation and walked up to where these three were sitting in Alumni Hall and shook each of their hands. Margaret knows, as President of another institution of higher education, how difficult the assessment challenge is, and she felt our team led us admirably and in all the right directions, even down to their candor—as exemplified in the six recommendations we gave ourselves—about where we can do more. Those were, by the way, the only six recommendations in the entire report. May I ask Virginia, Bryan and Chris to stand so that we may acknowledge their good work. Thank you.
SPRING EXCITEMENT

There has been a great deal of excitement at Mount Aloysius since the last State of the College Address six months ago. Let me pick a few highlights from just the last month of the spring semester at Mount Aloysius:

✓ Mount Aloysius students led the way at end-of-the-year events—the Undergraduate Research Symposium (80 posters, 159 students, 15 faculty mentors), the Academic Honors Assembly (over 100 honorees at our fourth annual), the Student Leadership Banquet—thank you Elaine (with its student—chosen “Mad Men” theme and over 50 honorees), the Chi Alpha Sigma Student—Athlete Honor Society Lunch—thank you Professor Nypaver (27 inductees, highest ever), the Academic “Latin Honors” Reception—thank you Drs. Dragani and Costanzo, the All-Sports Athletic Banquet—thank you Athletic Director Ryan (277 people in the Bertschi Center) and the Service Learning Expo—thank you Chair Dr. Meintel (also in Bertschi)—all held in a dizzying three week spin at the end of the semester—each provided opportunities for our students to shine. In most of these cases students played a major role in creating and organizing the event. In all of them, the good
works of many different students were profiled. Many of our faculty and five College Trustees—Mike McLanahan, Paul Calandra, Scott Lawhead, Anne Wilms and Ann Benzel—played roles in these signature programs in our school calendar.

✓ **Our Faculty did much of the legwork on the first two of these events.** The fourth annual Honors Recognition event saw over 100 students accept awards—thank you Associate Deans Anderson and Haschak, Dr. Lovett and Dr. Jane and Elaine. Our faculty also produced another excellent Undergraduate Research Symposium—thank you Chairman Dr. Engle and your committee Drs. Anderson, Arsenault, Goldyn, Shuttlesworth, Professors Anderson and Ritchey and Librarian Rob Stere. This year’s symposium included the work of several students on their way to graduate degrees, as well as a record number of submissions from health to environmental sciences, from Marcellus Shale to marketing plans for brave new business ventures. Thank you Symposium Committee members and all their health sciences colleagues and other faculty who made research a priority. [Student Research Symposium Highlight Video](#)

✓ **Our Student government leaders organized their own third-annual Leadership Banquet in April** (with a lot of help from Elaine I am sure), where they personally recognized more than 50 MAC students for outstanding service to clubs, organizations and to Mount Aloysius. And our Students Activities leaders put on a dazzling array of campus events, entertainments, competitions and assemblies last spring, from “open mike” coffee houses, to craft, game, intramural and activity nights, as well as a number of talented comedians, songmeisters and musicians who visited our campus. Thank you Elaine Grant, Dr. Jane Grassadonia, Chris Koren, Matt Lovell and all who helped organize this impressive roster of events. [Leadership Banquet Photos](#)

✓ **And our Admissions team put on another outstanding Mercy Presidential Scholars Banquet** in April, with 28 of 30 scholars and their families in attendance and a final yield of 80%. We will have almost 100 Mercy Presidential Scholars on campus this year, a new high. Thank you Dean of Admissions Frank Crouse, event organizer Caitlin Wilkinson and their teams, and especially our hard-working Mercy Presidential Scholars committee led by Stacy Schenk and including Shamim Rajpar, Linda Gaston, Caitlin Wilkinson, Chris Koren, Brian Smith and Drs. Cook, Dragani, Lovett and Smith.
Busy spring and because, in that mad rush to graduation we never had the chance to properly thank all these folks, we thank and salute them now.

AWARDS

Several other recent awards to the College that are of note. Let me outline them quickly and ask that you let me know any not on this list (so they can be included in the print version):

✓ **College of Distinction**: Listed for the fifth straight year as a “College of Distinction” for fall 2015 for “engaged students, great teaching, vibrant communities, and successful outcomes.”

✓ **Military Friendly College**: Named a 2015 Military Friendly School by G.I. Jobs and consistently since the inauguration of the program.

✓ **Dept. of Ed. Financial Responsibility Rating**: the US Department of Education released its “Financial Responsibility” scores for FY 2014, and we again received the highest possible rating, a 3.0. Mount Aloysius is one of 35 (of 130 rated) PA private institutions of higher education who received the perfect score two successive years. Safe to say that any school our size and classification would be delighted with these ratings.

✓ Six different Mount Aloysius community service initiatives were **commended by the student affairs section of the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities** (ACCU, 240+ Catholic Colleges). Though none of the six received one of the three national awards (DePaul, Loyola Baltimore and St. Vincent’s), the College did receive notice that we lost out by a decimal point when all the scoring was complete. Forget the honors, we are very proud of the staff and students that engineered this good work, and thank especially Dr. Jane and Tom Fleming who wrote up our submissions, Elaine Grant and Chris Koren in Student Affairs, Andrea Cecilli in Campus Ministry, American Sign Language faculty leader Kierstin Muroski, Mercy Youth Initiative volunteer Frank Hartnett, and all our staff and student volunteers at the Campus Thrift Store. I attach here the submissions that generated all the kudos—really worth reading these summaries of good work by our staff and students. [ASACCU submissions](#)

Some of our academic programs also had banner years:

✓ **Criminology honors**: Our students continue to shine in national testing, with an average score at the 90th percentile on the most recent national exam
✓ **Capsim Business honors:** our Business/Accounting program saw four of six MAC teams finished in the top quartile of nearly 2,000 collegiate teams competing globally in the *Capsim Capstone strategy simulation*. This continues the successes of MAC Accounting and Business Administration majors in the event, and demonstrates their decision-making skills and competitiveness as compared to seniors from other colleges and universities.

✓ **NCLEX Nursing honors:** with fully 35% of our total student body (and already on the way to a 100% job placement rate), our 2015 MAC nurses state exam pass rate exceeded 92%. That is just excellent and the fourth year (and eighth straight testing period) in a row where our overall rate will exceed 90%. That pass rate competes with and surpasses the rate for many institutions whose incoming classes carry far higher average SAT and ACT scores and exceeds both the state and national averages by more than 10%.

✓ **State exam honors in other health fields:** We had a 100% pass rate in the most recent state exams for EKG Techs, Phlebotomy Techs, Ultrasonography and Medical Imaging. Physical Therapy grads had a pass rate of 90%, medical lab techs and graduating Surg Tech students passed at an 86% rate, 16 points ahead of the national benchmark; and 100% of our recent Surg Tech grads have found job placements.

✓ And finally our **Master’s students in Counseling** again achieved a pass rate of 100% continuing our perfect record for the third year since the program’s inception.

We salute all the fine work done by the faculty and staff in these programs in preparing our students for success in their professional careers.

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**MOUNT ALOYSIUS 2014-15: BY THE NUMBERS**

In sheer metrics, the numbers for 2014-15 are impressive:

✓ **Our faculty taught 1,172 sections for 41,062 credits to almost 1800 different students**—about a 9% drop in total credits since last year but still a very substantial body of work. Thank you Dean Pugliese and Associate Deans Anderson and Haschak and our entire faculty.

✓ **Our Student Affairs team conducted over 450 social, educational and res-life activities with over 50 student**
organizations, an arithmetic increase over even five years ago. Thank you Dr. Jane, Elaine Grant, Chris Koren and Matt Lovell.

✓ Our Admissions team helped produce the highest number of graduates in our history, and our tenth FTE increase in the last 11 years.

✓ Our student-athletes competed in 411 events in 14 intercollegiate sports, second most in our NCAA history, and brought home the Dean’s Cup for academic excellence for the second time in the four years it has been awarded. Thank you Ryan Smith and team, all our coaches and faculty mentors.

✓ Our community of actors, artists and writers
  o produced 9 Belltowers (60% increase from two years ago) and helped run a summer Journalism camp—thank you Dr. Jess. They also took it digital with help from our Digital Grotto team.
  o assembled 10 art exhibits (between three show places on campus, the Wolf Kuhn Gallery, the ACWC and Cosgrave)—thank you Dr. Talbot and your favorite assistants, Sisters Giuseppe and Benedict Joseph. Art Photo Gallery
  o performed 2 plays and an improv night—thank you Professor Magee and team (As You Like It Photo Gallery) and
  o Vox Nova sang at 4 concerts (and performed on 12 other occasions at the College or in the community)—thank you Professor Way. Vox Nova Video Playlist

✓ Our student volunteers donated 15,353 hours to 214 non—profit partners on 315 community projects, including service again in Guyana and New Orleans—highest totals since we started counting. Thank you Dr. Jane, Sister Helen, Chris and Andrea, and all who volunteered this year. Guyana Service Trip video
Our Digital Grotto team produced 122 new videos on more than 60 different aspects of Mount Aloysius life, posted 230 College albums (just about double last year) on Flickr and even tracked my trip to the White House Education Summit thru the course of my 35 tweets. Thank you Jack, Sam and team.

And over the summer, 350 young basketball players (including 10 from Belfast, Northern Ireland), over 300 students (in 73 different classes), 54 PSP young cadets and 10 aspiring young journalists graced our campus.

All this (and more) activity generated an output of over 1,350 print articles (up from 1,200 last year, and 750 in 2012—13) which has a dollar value of approximately $3.2M. All that free advertising is good news for Admissions and for the College.

A FINAL WORD ON TRIFECTAS

We heard about other trifectas of sorts in the last six months and let me comment on three of them. First, we had a trifecta of sorts with our theme The Good Life. The campus seemed very engaged, not only with the formal Speaker Series devoted to the topic, but also by the range of
extracurricular activities that focused attention on the topic and finally by some curricular approaches that back—grounded the theme. At Mount Aloysius, you all helped parse the concept from multiple directions, through:

- **Connections Course readings** required for all first-years (Fall and Spring)
- **Orientation skits** about *The Good Life* (August) [Orientation Photo Gallery](https://example.com/)
- **Little People’s Place art** work on the theme (September)
- **Theater production** *Nickel and Dimed* (October) [Nickel and Dimed Photo Gallery](https://example.com/)
- **Faculty roundtable** on the theme (November)
- **Residence Hall dorm projects** on *The Good Life* (January—February)
- **The Good Life by the Decades** multimedia presentations (March) [Video on the 1970’s](https://example.com/) | [Photo Gallery](https://example.com/)

These curricular and extracurricular explorations of the theme were in addition to **seven formal Speaker Series lectures** (which often included classroom appearances, meal “conversations” with student/faculty groups, and other informal exchanges) from folks like

- **Father Byron** at Convocation (September) [Video](https://example.com/) | [Photos](https://example.com/) | [Monograph](https://example.com/)
- **Sister Sheila Carney** during Mercy Week (October) [Photos](https://example.com/) | [Monograph](https://example.com/)
- **NYU philosopher Dr. Larry Jackson** (fall honors lecture) [Video](https://example.com/) | [Photos](https://example.com/) | [Monograph](https://example.com/)
- **Trustee Ann Benzel** at Graduation (December) [Video](https://example.com/) | [Photos](https://example.com/) | [Monograph](https://example.com/)
- **KPMG Managing Partner Jerry Maginnis** (Spring business lecture)
- **Dr. Tim Shriver**’s Moral Choices Lecture (April) [Video](https://example.com/) | [Photos](https://example.com/) | [Monograph](https://example.com/)
- **Dean Guido Calabresi**’s commencement address (May) [Video](https://example.com/) | [Photos](https://example.com/) | [Monograph](https://example.com/)

We’ve certainly had a trifecta of sorts on The Good Life—a full dousing from three educational directions—formal lectures, in-classroom exploration and through Orientation and other extracurricular activities.

**Second, this year’s graduation might also be viewed as a trifecta of sorts—1) we shattered last year’s record for graduates in a single year (402) with 486 (thanks mostly to our RN to BSN on line program); 2) we were able to attract an outstanding practitioner as our commencement speaker; and 3) we made the time to honor one of our own in an unprecedented way.** Graduates were delirious as always—and I hope those of you who were
here had the chance to hear the familiar litany of “way to go Mom’s” (and at least one “Love you Dad”) that always pepper MountAloysius graduations.

Last but not least in our graduation trifecta was our loss this semester of five members of our staff and faculty, none with a bigger footprint than Professor of English Maggy Steinbeiser, Mace Bearer at Convocation just this fall and veteran of 44 winters on the mountaintop, all of them teaching at Mount Aloysius. Her longtime department chair, Dr. Tom Coakley, wrote a compelling citation that summed up Maggy’s more than four decades at the College. It was beautifully read by Trustee Ann Benzel, and received in person on stage by her husband Raymond, son Benjamin (himself a teacher) and grandsons Nate and Sawyer. I hope that you all agree that we finished out our year on The Good Life by showing our appreciation for an especially well-lived one. We also honor the following Mount Aloysius College members that we have lost this year: Harry Ettienne, Athletics Support Staff; Gary Bumbarger, Adjunct Faculty Religious Studies and James Perrachinno, Asst. Coach Softball, as well as former Mount Aloysius College employees: Joe Makosky, Adjunct Faculty, Educational Enrichment and Dave "Shorty" McConnell, Maintenance.

One last trifecta, on a more upbeat note—we were treated to some excellent student speeches at graduation. Mardia Gibson’s ’15 opening prayer was elegant and eloquent (like herself) and brought us all back to the Mercy core values. Mardia is now in Guyana as a Mercy Corps volunteer at the very site where she twice volunteered while a student here. Adam Pernelli ’15 (Student Government Prez, four-year degree recipient, traditional-aged residential
student, 2013 MAC’s Got Talent winner and current GA pursuing his MBA) and Lyndsay Danella ’15 (mature student, 2-year degree, young mom and commuter) practically soft shoed their way through a well-choreographed, graceful and melodic salutatory address. And Laura Stahli ’15 delivered a thoughtful valedictory on the theme of the “double horizon”—one horizon that we point towards in our external life and the other that points the way forward on character. [Commencement Highlight Video] | [Commencement Photo Gallery]

Finally, Second Circuit Federal Court of Appeals Senior Judge (and my old Torts teacher at Yale Law School) Guido Calabresi literally brought the crowd to its feet with his kind manner, eloquent advice and unforgettable personal stories. His life—from immigrant to Rhodes Scholar, and from law professore to the second highest court in the land—is The Good Life personified, and after that speech everyone in the room knew why we had invited him to close out our year on the theme. [Hon. Guido Calabresi’s Speech]

So this was a year of trifectas, none more compelling than Graduation 2015. [Commencement Photo Spread]

One last comment before closing out our look back over last year. As you all know, our community experienced an incident last spring that, sadly, is becoming ever more common in our society. I am referring to the weapons incident on campus in April. In this instance, a student—the same person who later that week discharged a firearm during Easter Mass at the Cathedral—brought
loaded firearms onto campus in violation of College policy and as a result was expelled and barred from campus. We have reviewed and refined our policies and will continue to work on them and do everything we can to ensure the safety of all in our community. We will also work to raise awareness on the issue, beginning this week when the Cambria County District Attorney will join us for a panel discussion on the topic. Article about Charges Filed

II. LOOKING AHEAD TO 2015—16

I mentioned at the outset that I like to ask my fellow College presidents what it is that keeps them up at night. Surprisingly, the answers are very consistent. Let me outline three that concern me, and that ring a bell with many of my colleagues as well—the importance of being in a “planning posture,” at all times; wrestling with the latest tech trends and their impact on higher education; and the increasing focus on higher education as locus for job training. A few words on each.

A PERMANENT PLANNING POSTURE

President Kennedy once said something to the effect that “we don’t want a planned society but we need to be a society that plans.” We might say the same about college campuses. And one thing that keeps me up lately is my concern about the ten-year “planning posture” of Mount Aloysius. With the exception of perhaps a hundred highly selective institutions in this country, there shouldn’t be a college President who doesn’t worry about this all the time.

Seismic shifts in higher education have been occurring all around us and one of my responsibilities, and yours, is to anticipate the shifts that matter to us and protect and advance the educational and business model that is Mount Aloysius. We have taken a few steps in the last few months to address these midnight worries.
First, we worked with an outside consultant to take a hard look at our athletic program and what we are doing for our student athletes. At some institutions, the athletic program is a significant part of their economic model. It is not at Mount Aloysius, where somewhat less than 10% of our student-athletes is actually recruited. We are still parsing some of the results of that analysis.

Second, I appointed Vice President for Enrollment Frank Crouse and Senior VP for Academic Affairs Dr. Pugliese to take a similar look at our enrollment and admissions policies. The idea is to try to see ten years into the future, get a sense of the demographics and our prospects (given our current approach) and recommend adjustments that we might make over time. One of the comments from the Middle States Commission that Frank Crouse and I took to heart was their view that we don’t really have a strategic enrollment plan. This process is intended to correct that.

I am not sure we can work any harder in our overall admissions approach, but maybe we can find ways to work smarter, make more direct appeals to certain constituencies and tie our mission more strongly into our marketing (another recommendation from the Middle States team).

Third, I appointed Senior VP for Administrative Affairs Suzanne Campbell to lead us into the next Campus Master Plan, which we are calling MAC2025. She is well into that effort—hosting focus groups, meeting with design firms, etc.—and you will hear more about this effort in the coming year.

Finally, we will be making similar explorations into other areas—most especially curriculum—where we will look at everything from new health sciences/business/computer science concentrations and majors, to competency-based models, to twenty-first century core
curriculum models, to technology-infused models for higher education. Our three associate deans have been at this work with Dr. Pugliese for the last six months.

The idea of the whole “planning posture” enterprise is for us to gather as many minds from within our community as possible to look, in a focused way, at the ten-year prospects for the college. If we change nothing, where will we be in ten years? If we change $x$, what will that mean for enrollment; what will that mean for the academic model; what will that mean for financial aid; what will that mean for residence life, etc., etc. That is our challenge, and I invite all of you to help us answer these questions so critical to Mount Aloysius.

TECHNOLOGY AND HIGHER EDUCATION

One of the things that I’ve worried about since before I was even inaugurated is the impact of technology on our enterprise. Each year in this address, we’ve considered the impact of new technologies on what we do every day. The goal that we set at the time of the inauguration was to produce graduates who are “job-ready, community-ready and technology-ready.” And we’ve been following a four-part agenda in the pursuit of that last part of that trifecta, “technology-ready,” by requiring every student to:

- complete three courses in the technology of communications
- complete a required percentage of technology intensive courses
- complete at least one online course under the supervision of our faculty
- reap the benefits of the college’s commitment to providing a technology rich educational environment.

I want to thank all the folks who have worked especially hard to carry out that agenda, including Senior Vice President Suzanne Campbell who has chaired our campus-wide technology committee, Professor Karen Watt who has done so much to craft courses that help our students achieve that goal, Rich Shea and his team who have helped guide our investments to maintain a technology-rich environment and many others. We’ve made progress on this agenda but still have more to do.

There are new challenges every year to this technology/education construct. One of the keenest analysts on the whole evolution of the internet is Mary Meeker who became known as "Queen of the Net" after a Barron's Magazine piece on her meteoric rise in the field. In 2014, Forbes listed her as the 77th most powerful woman in the world. Meeker does an annual “internet trends report”, which is as acute (and occasionally, acerbic) as any such report on the market.

Let me identify just five “high notes” from Meeker’s symphony of concerns that make it clear why so many of us lose sleep over this challenge to higher education:
1. **Internet use continues to increase exponentially**: the number of internet users has increased from 35 million 20 years ago to 2.8 billion through 2014. The percentage of internet users on our campus approaches 100.

2. **Mobile phone use is epidemic, and increasingly as an information tool**. In the last 20 years the number of mobile phone users went from 80 million or 1% of the world’s population to 5.2 billion or 73% of the world’s population. Many colleges are working on global mobile education and outreach strategies, something we haven’t begun to address.

3. **The internet impact on education, at least according to Meeker, is nowhere near its target**: Meeker estimates it’s only impacted education at a 25% level whereas the consumers sector has been impacted 100%, the business world 75%. Do we need to catch up in some other way and alkalize that relationship between the internet and higher education?

4. **Adult preoccupation with digital media has grown arithmetically**: the average US adult spends almost six hours a day on digital media—more than twice the rate just seven years ago. Most of that time is now spent on mobile devices. A question for us might be how much of that time is spent on educational apps and sites?

5. **The smart phone is your constant companion**: 80% of young people say that their smart phone never leaves their side day or night. Should we be thinking about what it would be like to build smart phone-specific educational platforms that are designed for very small interactions throughout much of the day on subjects that we think will enhance critical thinking?

As always, the data on technology and education can be overwhelming on their face, but the implications are also overwhelmingly clear. We must continue to analyze these new trends, educate ourselves on the important intersections between technology and critical thinking and fight for and finance the tools we and our students need.
HIGHER EDUCATION AS JOB TRAINING

We have heard a lot lately about the proposition that American higher education should focus exclusively on preparing people for their lives at work. Teach my daughter about productivity and the bottom line, not poetry and a higher calling.

At the grand opening of the Frost Library on the Amherst campus half a century ago, President Kennedy made his case for the converse (poetry and the higher calling as a noble purpose for higher education), with (of all things) his very own poem on the subject. He said:

"Don't teach my boy poetry,"
an English mother recently
wrote the Provost of Harrow.
"Don't teach my boy poetry;
he's going to stand for Parliament."
Well, perhaps she was right—
but if more politicians knew poetry,
and more poets knew politics,
I am convinced the world
would be a little better place to live.
(Full text here)

Fifty years later, there is a growing sentiment that college education should be all about future employment and economic productivity, a notion that has become a staple particularly in Presidential campaigns this season. In truth, this insistence in some circles that higher education be judged by the salaries it produces is a fairly new concept.

For most of the 800 years since the practice of higher education began—at places like Bologna in Italy and at the Sorbonne in France, at Heidelberg in Germany and Edinburgh in Scotland, at Valencia in Spain, Vilnius in Lithuania, Basel in Switzerland and Oxford and Cambridge in England—the central idea was not about credentialing for the trades. The focus was on thinking; preparation for trades and professions happened elsewhere. That model evolved into one where the focus was still on thinking, but history majors and philosophy majors and math and psych majors alike all competed for entry-level Wall Street-type jobs and put their thinking caps (carefully knit during their undergraduate years) on in their first year in the real (non-higer education) world to nail down the nuances of the chosen profession.

And let’s be frank about our model at Mount Aloysius. 60% of our students are studying health sciences, hoping there is a direct connection to a career in radiology or nursing or as a physician’s assistant or a DPT. Another 15% of our students are focused on business and IT, another 6% on criminology, and there is a lot of the practical—knowledge about their future professions—built directly into their curriculums.
But at Mount Aloysius, we also insist that they take a certain courses that focus on their critical thinking capacities, beginning with Connections in their first year; we encourage them to learn outside the classroom, from extracurricular activities, guest-lectures and simple contact with faculty and friends; and we try to prepare them to be lifelong learners, knowing that the pace of change in their working lives may be exponential.

Let me offer a couple of thoughts about this building snowball—the snowball that says education should be about job training and that success in higher education should be measured by the salaries of its graduates—and invite your thoughts on same as we work together this semester. Slate article

First, there is a giant fallacy at the very heart of this argument. If we are going to measure higher education’s value by future salary, then we might as well just scrap 90% of the fields that we teach. It is pretty obvious that engineering and a few other STEM-related fields predict the highest future earnings, so let’s just focus there and win the competition. You don’t need me to diagnose what a disaster that would be for higher education and for society. I would be interested to hear your examples of why this approach would be a disaster as we encounter each other on campus this semester.

Second, there is a tremendous body of literature, both empirical studies and anecdotal examples, to support the proposition that a liberal arts education is the major contributor to the health of the nation and the economy, that it provides leadership essential to many endeavors key to our progress as a society and that it even leads to healthier, fuller, happier lives. CIC Liberal Arts Research and Data | NAICU Liberal Arts article

Finally, as a former PA Secretary of Labor and Industry, I well understand that there are talents fundamental to success in future occupations that can be taught or modeled in college. Habits of industriousness, attention to detail, good writing skills, and yes, even understanding how to read a balance sheet are not skills antithetical to the classroom experience. But I think it is a fallacy to argue that that is the “job” of higher education to literally perform the entire job training functions previously assigned to the private, non-profit and public sectors—typically in the first year or two of service by a new employee. The notion that the college should do job training as its only mission is misguided and shortsighted. Forbes article | The Chronicle article | Academe blog post

The notion of “higher education as job training” is at the heart of hundreds of legislative proposals either already enacted or proposed at the multi-state level and is prime fodder in candidate debates across the country. As an institution committed to educating the whole person, to instilling a sense of mission and the Mercy values, we ignore this talk at our peril. I invite you to engage in this debate with me, whenever you are able.
III. LOOKING FORWARD

Just two closing comments as we look forward to 2015-16—a few words about our yearlong theme on Voice; and some commentary on your contributions to the good of the commonweal.

VOICE: YEARLONG THEME and SPEAKER SERIES

Mount Aloysius is fairly unique in the ranks of higher education institutions in that we choose a theme each year and try to coordinate Orientation, the Connections courses, our Speakers Series, our faculty symposium, dorm activities—even the activities in our Little People’s Place—around that single idea. Our theme this year is a simple one, “Voice.”

Two years ago, we wrestled with the idea of The Common Good—what is it and how do we pursue it. That led us last year to explore the idea of The Good Life, and we started at convocation with a fabulous interpretation of that theme from Father Bill Byron, who defined it as a “life lived generously in the service of others.” We finished that theme with Yale Law School Dean Guido Calabresi who reminded us that we always get second chances in our pursuit of the good life.

We have a committee who helps me formulate this theme each year, and it occurred to us that in order to define and act on both The Common Good and The Good Life, it is essential that we develop a voice that enables that action. Hence, this theme, this year, at Mount Aloysius.

Voice—it can be written or spoken, first or third person, active or passive, digital or analog, cyber or literal, mythic or spiritual. Voice is the original social medium, first expressed physically as drawings on a cave wall, today through emoticons on a text message.
Voice in literature is the form or format through which narrators tell their stories. The Voice is Jem in Harper Lee’s *To Kill a Mockingbird*; though she is now an adult, she tells her story from a childhood point of view. In Hemingway’s *The Old Man and the Sea*, the Voice is a third person narrator, recounting a struggle he part witnesses and part imagines. In Faulkner’s *The Sound and the Fury*, the story of the Compson family is recounted through four different Voices, including a stream of consciousness rendering by an emotionally and intellectually challenged family member. And in Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein, the Voice is epistolary, a fancy word that means simply that the story is derived from letters of a third party, in this case Captain Robert Walton.

Voices come to us in other venues as well. Actors have voice. Musicians have voice. There are voices our students will study in history, in politics, in science and the arts. Paintings, sculpture, digital art are often powerful expressions of voice—evoking emotions that range from rage to rapture and inspiring reflections that are at once philosophical, imaginary, even practical.

This year, you will also hear about voices of courage.

There is Mairead. A woman loses her sister and three young children, crushed to death against a church railing when a self-anointed freedom fighter decided to engage in a gun battle on a city street on a gorgeous summer afternoon. The sister who survived had a seventh-grade education and didn’t think her voice mattered. But she founded a movement of women and men who felt like she did—that violence was not the answer to the conundrum of Ireland—led marches of 100,000 people at a time in Belfast, Dublin, London and helped cut that violence by 80%. She won the Nobel Prize for Peace in 1978.

Then there is Mandela. A man spends 28 years of his life unjustly imprisoned in solitary confinement in nasty, brutish, filthy conditions. He had been a leader of the major opposition group in his country, one that often resorted to violence to press its point. And his first act on his release is to invite his jailer to lunch. His name is Nelson Mandela and his voice evolved over those three decades in prison from loud, angry bursts of recrimination to a universal message of forgiveness and for peace and reconciliation. He won the Nobel Prize for Peace in 1993.
And finally there is Malala. She was 11 when she first found her voice and started to blog on the importance of education for young girls like herself in her native Pakistan. She was 12 when the BBC did a documentary about her. She was 14 when the Taliban shot her as a warning to all those who advocated for the rights of women. Though she had to leave her country, she never moderated her voice. And she was 17 when she won the Nobel Prize for Peace in 2014.

Now here is a surprise about all three of these voices. Not one of them set out to win a Nobel Prize. Not one of them started out with a desire to influence anyone’s life beyond their own neighborhood. They each started out by finding their own voice and then by talking to one person about their concerns, and then another and another.

But these three voices—from Northern Ireland, South Africa and Pakistan—have one other thing in common—they found their listeners, literally millions of people—people just like all of us here today—people who responded to the unique resonance of their particular vocal chords, their particular stories—people like us who responded to their authenticity.

This is where we all begin this academic year—with authenticity. And a big part of our job here at Mount Aloysius is to help our students find and develop that authentic Voice which is theirs. How are we going to do that?

It all comes back to some of the goals that we will set out together at Convocation in just a few weeks. First, we are going to help our students grow in appropriate ways, so that they are job-ready, technology-ready and community-ready. Second, we are going to impress upon them the value of asking good questions, and as they will learn from our faculty, the key antecedent to asking a good question is being a good listener. Third, we are going to implant in them the importance of lifelong learning, encouraging them to reach beyond the classroom and to embrace careful listening, critical thinking and authentic expression as lifelong pursuits.

Most of this learning will take place initially in your classrooms. But to truly find their voices, they are going to have to take some chances outside the classroom as well. What they choose to read, what opinions they dare to try out on their friends, which Ted Talks and other digital voices they choose to listen to—all will help on their journey to finding their own authentic voice.
We will also offer a ton of other opportunities through which to explore the idea of Voice and with which to begin the process of developing one. We have seven guest speakers who will talk to us about the idea of voice this year, including:

- A Rhodes Scholar, writer and college president who will kick off our year of exploration on Voice with some thoughts on the notion of voice at Convocation.

- A Pulitzer-Prize winner who, on Constitution Day will, engage the topic of “Presidential” voices, examining 10 great American speeches and what these voices tell us about the politics of today.

- A writer who, at a very young age, has become a voice for “mercy” from her perch at America Magazine, the nation’s premier Catholic weekly journal and who will share her perspective as a millennial voice trying, in the poet W.H. Auden’s famous words, “to undo the folded lie.”

- A health care advocate who will share her story as a voice for those laid low by illness and confused by the tragic choices faced by those who live in the shadows of life.

- An African American actor with a James Earl Jones voice, who will give life to the voices of black leaders in America, as we celebrate Martin Luther King Day.

- An expert on immigration who will consider the voices of peoples past and present who came to our shores in search of a better life. And

- A minister, lawyer and college president who rowed by herself across the Atlantic Ocean and who will give voice at graduation to the experience of both her initial failed attempt and her later successful achievement.

A good friend of mine wrote that “just as our literal voice is formed and produced by a series of physical operations involving the lungs, windpipe, larynx, sinuses and mouth, the metaphorical voice we consider this year is the product of a series of mental operations: study, investigation, reflection, debate and critical thinking.”

Of course, we recognize that these same mental operations fairly describe the work of a college education and its goal: the discovery and cultivation of a “voice” in each of our students. And so we can look forward to an exciting year exploring together this topic so very close to the heart of what we do here at Mount Aloysius.
Thanks to Dr. Michel Jones, Dr. Jane, Elaine and all their collaborators, who have worked hard already to build the theme into programming for the academic and social life of our community. Thanks too to our Digital Grotto team who will be interviewing students, faculty and staff throughout the year inviting reactions to what “voice” means to them as experienced through our curricular, extra-curricular, and non-curricular campus events.

And let me say finally, thanks to each one of you for all your dedicated service, and for everything you do to give voice: to the mission of the Sisters of Mercy, to the values of College, and in support of the aspirations of our students.

**HIGHER EDUCATION AND LARGER PURPOSES**

Four years ago, in a similar address, I quoted the President’s challenge to the nation after the attempted assassination of an American congresswoman in Tucson, Arizona. He called on Americans to

“expand our moral imaginations, to listen to each other more carefully, to sharpen our instincts for empathy and remind ourselves all the ways our hopes and dreams are bound together.”

I was especially upset about that incident, which took six American lives, ranging from a 9-year old girl to a grandmother celebrating her 40th anniversary. This past year, we have seen a series of incidents that, simultaneously, showcase the worst in our society (the perpetrators) while bringing out the best (the first responders).

I mentioned to all of you at that time that—though I had gotten fairly used to violent attacks on the representatives of a democratic society when I spent two years as a peace worker in a war-torn country—I was stunned that such an attack took place in my own country.

In the past few months, we have seen mass shootings that left 9 dead in a Charleston church, 4 Marines and a soldier killed in attacks on military facilities in Chattanooga, and 2 dead and 9 injured in another movie theater shooting, this time in Louisiana. And that is just the tip of the iceberg.

There were 18 mass shootings in April this year, 39 in May, 41 in June and another 34 in July. At one point, the news entity that keeps track of such things—a macabre assignment if I ever heard one—reported that on the 204th day of the year, July 24, there had been exactly 204 mass shootings in our country (defined as any shooting where four or more people are injured or killed).
As deeply disturbing for many was our single encounter with a student who came to campus fully armed, when we look at these national statistics, it occurs to me that we got off light. But that doesn’t mean we don’t have a role to play in addressing those situations where people, schools and communities weren’t as fortunate.

Four years ago, we talked about the role that we in education play in the march to a more civil society. Critical thinking, the ability to listen, to analyze, to form ideas and to communicate them—these are all skills fundamental to both education and democracy. And for many, college is where we learn these skills,

- by providing a safe, respectful environment that allows for opinions to be shared
- by creating an atmosphere where the holder of an opinion can feel safe
- by teaching critical thinking skills in classes as distinct as cross-sectional anatomy and Connections, Imaging Principles and American History
- by encouraging the dispassionate consideration of complex issues
- by, in effect, giving students a nurturing environment to test their democratic skills.

Mount Aloysius College can be an incubator for democracy where all the skills are taught, all the behaviors are modeled so that when students become “citizens,” they will have the tools needed to make democracy work.

And at Mount Aloysius, I want to remind you that we have a very special role to play as we endeavor as a society to bring out the best and not the worst in our citizenry. How can I say that? Because at Mount Aloysius we serve a community of students in which 3 in 5 are the first generation in their family to attempt higher education, 1 in 2 are recipients of federal needs-based assistance for college, and 2 in 5 come from families that live within 150% of the poverty level—the highest ratios of any four-year institution within 50 miles of Old Main.

These skills that you model and teach every day are being taken home to households where people just haven’t had much chance to keep track of current events or parse the political posturing in presidential races or even worry very much about which issues are most important to them. I just described the home that I grew up in—as a first-generation American, my father felt lucky enough to have the high school degree his parents never had a chance at. But raising 12 children on a high school education meant that my father worked two or even three jobs for most of my childhood. He and my mother just did not have much time left over for critical thinking or other educational enterprises—luxuries that we enjoy in this campus.
I mention all of this today, at the close of these remarks, to remind us all how lucky we are to have the time and the training to think critically every day, to have the luxury to read “widely and deeply” (as the Shribmans encouraged us to do in their Commencement address two years ago) on the issues of the day, to have the luxury and the time to share our insights with a majority of first-generation learners (who will take your lessons home to their families, as I did to mine).

The bottom line is that we in higher education don’t have a first-hand role in stopping these mass shootings, or ending the intolerance that seems to be at the heart of so many of them. But I am convinced that higher education has a significant role to play in encouraging civil discourse, in promoting community and citizenship and in developing the capacity for critical thinking—the very tools that can eat away at that intolerance.

I am also persuaded that we have a special role to play in those efforts here at Mount Aloysius. I thank each and every one of you for your work:

- to enhance our students’ ability to think critically
- to model civil discourse on complicated issues
- to teach good citizenship through the pursuit of the common good
- to inculcate a commitment to community
- to encourage openness to the “other” in our society and
- to help our students develop their own “voices.”

All of these tools, in whose development we do have a first-hand role, will help empower them for constructive engagement with their fellow citizens.

As we close this opening session of our academic year, let’s take a visual look back at the past year with the magical Year in Pictures produced by our own Digital Grotto.

Thank you for all your support at this most exciting time in the Mount Aloysius calendar—new faces, new classes, new hope. And let’s all have another great year at Mount Aloysius!