

President's Fall Convocation Address

OneLeMoyne

Turning Point

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What must we become?

One year ago, I stood here as your new president and issued a clarion call for campus-wide dialogue grounded in respectful conversation and resulting in necessary action. I asked that we unite and embrace the conversational process I introduced as "OneLeMoyne." This substantial undertaking has revolved around the question that burns at the core of our community: "At Le Moyne College, what must we become?" The fate of this College will be determined by our answer.

Your response to my call has been extraordinary. In sessions that sometimes lasted for hours, here in Grewen Auditorium and at various other locations on and off campus, we gathered to discuss our beloved Catholic, Jesuit College. We considered deeply who we are, where we have been, and where, in the landscape of higher education, Le Moyne College should go. Our conversations have been warm, lively, candid, and well attended. Stories were told, memories relished, humor savored, dreams shared, moments relived, and hopes expressed.

Through the intense OneLeMoyne process, you have described the full scope and complexity of the actions which call us forward as an institution. And now, in partnership with each other, we will become the College you envision.

In order to realize our aspirations, we must successfully address two critical challenges as a campus community. First, we will complete our highly collaborative OneLeMoyne process and finalize the four key documents. Second, we will complete three long-over-due tasks: revising the Core curriculum, updating and professionalizing our personnel review and compensation practices, and addressing critical facilities needs.

Turning Point

St. Ignatius understood that life's joys provide strength for challenging times. So before addressing the tasks that lie ahead, let us pause and consider good reasons to celebrate. The past year has shifted and accelerated our trajectory toward greatness. Our recent achievements suggest that this is a turning point in the history of Le Moyne College.

During 2008-2009, one of the worst economic years since the Great Depression, we took actions that resulted in record-breaking success in student enrollment, exceeding our goals and achieving full residential capacity. On August 29 we welcomed 612 new full-time undergraduates, the largest entering class in the history of the College. This achievement is a tribute to the spirit of hard work and collaboration on this campus.

Last year, Le Moyne College was the recipient of the truly transformative McDevitt gift of \$50 million. As Father Donald Monan, S.J. described in his [moving speech in the Panasci Chapel](#) on April 21:

. . . the magnificent gift that the College received this year, not only put in place an altogether new footing on which to build an endowment, it created national visibility for the college that was as unprecedented as it was welcomed. The spontaneous joy with which the news of that gift [was met], wherever it was received, I believe, made unmistakable – the national recognition of Le Moyne and appreciation for its integrity.

Thanks to this gift, we are incredibly fortunate to be among the very few colleges in the world that have a significantly larger endowment today than a year ago.

Also during 2008 and 2009, Le Moyne was the recipient of many significant external affirmations: the Division of Management received accreditation from the prestigious AACSB; our faculty and staff successfully competed for over \$1.5 million in external grants and awards; and members of our staff received regional and national press for their work to advance the College, first among them, Jim Dishaw, who is gaining a national reputation as an expert in energy conservation.

In another important milestone, Le Moyne College was listed for the first time in The Princeton Review's "Best Colleges in the Northeast." This achievement is significant for many reasons. First, this is a highly trusted source. As Brian Harkins, Class of 1979, wrote to me, "I am delighted to hear this news! . . . In the NY Metro area, where I reside, many people consider what they write . . . gospel."

Second, The Princeton Review conducts a survey of current students in order to assess each of the schools included. Not all of the entries are entirely positive. But ours is impressive. It is perhaps the greatest affirmation we could have sought.

Listen to what our students say, for they capture a sense of what each of you already knows Le Moyne to be, what each of you already works for every day:

An 'academically challenging, but supportive school,' Le Moyne maintains a top-notch teaching staff and a bulletin full of 'interesting, intelligent, [and] engaging classes.' Professors are 'out of this world,' and 'the overall academic experience is one of the highest caliber, which constantly challenges the student to go further and achieve an understanding of the subject at hand, not just a completion of the assignment.' With few exceptions, professors are 'very accessible and approachable, always willing to lend an extra academic hand. . .'

I salute and congratulate all of you. The days of the "hidden gem" are over.

Setting our Future Direction: OneLeMoyne

And now, to our future. Success requires differentiation on points of distinction. Differentiation begins with the articulation and embrace of a powerful vision. During this new academic year, we will, therefore, complete the OneLeMoyne process and create an implementation plan based on its results.

As I initiated the OneLeMoyne conversations, I called for the OneLeMoyne Committee to create four incisive documents: first, a compelling vision of our future as a Jesuit college; second, a description of those special characteristics that make our graduates distinctive; third, a distillation of our core content, pedagogy and learning processes with a focused emphasis on what is distinctive about the Le Moyne College experience; and, fourth, a delineation of a set of strategic directions to which we must commit ourselves, both in our individual actions, and organizational practices, during the years to come.

Today I am proud to present these OneLeMoyne documents in penultimate form—documents that have been carefully composed through an intensely collaborative process. Through these documents, I offer you this evening our vision for Le Moyne, as you yourselves have articulated it in dialogue as a community. Copies of the documents are available here in Grewen Hall, and they are also posted on the [OneLeMoyne website](#). I am also making available my installation address where I described our way of proceeding based on what I have heard during the OneLeMoyne conversations.

As you will see, these documents raise the bar here at Le Moyne College. But I know that each one of us can and will rise to the inspiring and noble challenge that is inherent in them. This begins with your continued commitment to the OneLeMoyne process which will, I am sure, remain unwavering through its conclusion. Please continue to share your thoughts: you may participate by sending your comments to the OneLeMoyne Committee [through the website](#) and by joining the discussions which will be led by each of the vice presidents and deans over the next two months. By November 11, all remarks will be returned to the Committee, which will have one month to incorporate suggestions. By December 11, the Committee will have reported back to me. I will review the documents in conjunction with the President's Cabinet and the Board of Trustees at their February gathering. Then we will move swiftly to establish the strategic planning process which will implement these ideas.

It is thanks to your participation and the efforts of the OneLeMoyne Committee that this has been a model process, one that has been every bit as successful as I would have hoped.

Three Lingering Issues

As we move to finalize the OneLeMoyne documents, we will also address three unfinished tasks that have stymied progress at our College.

The First Lingering Issue is the Common Undergraduate Curriculum

As the OneLeMoyne documents make clear, our primary commitment is to academic and intellectual excellence in the Catholic and Jesuit tradition of higher education. Academic excellence for us must be both a process and an outcome of our OneLeMoyne vision. The first step forward, and one of the most important ways for a college like ours to differentiate itself, is through a distinctive Core Program. Through it, we put our unique academic stamp on the undergraduate educational experience.

The current Core dates to 1987. In 1998, recommendations for ten changes to the Core were proposed, but only one non-curricular change was implemented. A five-year process to revise the Core culminated in Spring 2009 with a vote against revision that has left the College in an unacceptable situation. The Core does not reflect the type of education we aspire to offer, the education that our students merit, and the education which contemporary times and our mission demand. Indeed, the current Core undermines our ability to achieve greatness as a College.

It is time to finish the project of the Core Curriculum Revision. Along with the Faculty Senate and the chairs of departments that teach in the Core, Provost Linda LeMura has formed a Task Force on Core Revision, co-chaired by Drs. John Langdon and Theresa

Beaty. The task force will undertake an 18-month process to develop and pass a new Core Curriculum, based on input from the faculty. Together, we will capture our best vision of Catholic, Jesuit higher education. This commitment will be sharpened for the unique challenges of our times. We owe this to our undergraduates and, as members of the academy committed to educating in the noblest sense, we owe it to ourselves. Let us plan boldly and honestly, transcending personal interests and divisive academic politics.

I am grateful for the hard work and care, past and present, of all those who seek to improve our Core. In particular, I appreciate the substantial investment made by Past Core Director, Dr. Michael Davis. I expect the Provost's Task Force to draw heavily from the impressive work that has already been done.

The Second Lingering Issue is our Personnel Review and Compensation Practices

It should be axiomatic at any college that performance and promotion reviews, as well as compensation practices, are consistent, fair, and aligned with the best practices in higher education.

Employing best practices in personnel development helps people stay current and engaged in their work and facilitates professional improvement. During the OneLeMoyné process it became apparent that we are not employing best practices across all divisions of the College. At the end of the spring term, in response to these concerns, I required all of the vice presidents to conduct thorough performance evaluations across all administrators and staff in their areas of responsibility. Under the direction of Lynn McMartin and the Human Resources Department, expert training was required of all supervisors. All staff and administrators were asked to review and revise their position descriptions and all completed a self evaluation. Even with some kinks along the way, people appeared pleased to undergo this process and gratified by its results. We will continue to improve our practices with each passing year. I assure you: fair, consistent, professional practices of evaluation will be the norm here at Le Moyné.

To continue my own commitment to leadership by example, I will use a comprehensive 360 degree performance review process for each of the vice presidents so that, in addition to annual reviews with the president, each will receive a full assessment based on broad input every five years. We will begin that process this year.

As our College has grown, annual performance reviews of untenured faculty and the triennial reviews of the tenured faculty have become an overwhelming challenge for the Academic Affairs Division, particularly for the Dean of Arts and Sciences. To improve the capacity and efficiency of faculty evaluation, Provost LeMura has followed the recommendation of the task force on academic administrative structure and appointed Dr. Barron Boyd as special assistant to the dean to facilitate this crucial process.

Last year was my first experience with rank and tenure decisions here at the College. Neither the Rank and Tenure Committee nor I was comfortable with the current process and practices. We had a meeting where we expressed our mutual concerns and frustrations. Le Moyné's rank and tenure policies do not uniformly reflect best practices and are in need of revision. I understand that others have similar concerns and applaud the fact that the Faculty Senate is undertaking a review this year.

In order to ensure Le Moyne's alignment with the best practices in higher education in compensation, I have undertaken an analysis of the Faculty Salary Plan. The plan was adopted in 1982 and has been a source of concern at various periods since its inception. An internal review began four years ago, at the request of the Finance Committee of the Board of Trustees, but there had been no meaningful progress prior to my arrival. (At the first meeting I attended as president, the Finance Committee made it very clear that it was running out of patience.)

From passionate supporters to severe critics, I have had many conversations with people about this plan. Compensation is understandably important to the Le Moyne faculty, but for far too long conflict over the Salary Plan has been allowed to absorb too much of the time, resources, and energy of individuals at this College. This contestation is damaging to Le Moyne.

Last December, at our first annual fall meeting on the College's budget, I laid out my plan for how Le Moyne College would proceed on this issue. I hired Dr. William Massy, a highly regarded international consultant on the economics of and resource allocation within colleges, academic quality, and academic productivity. His financial management and planning tools have become standards in the field and yielded considerable success when implemented at my prior institution.

Dr. Massy has impeccable credentials. He holds a bachelor's degree from Yale and a master's and doctorate in economics from MIT. He served on the faculty of the Sloan School of Management and the Graduate School of Business at Stanford prior to becoming Vice Provost and Dean of Research and later Vice President for Business and Finance. He founded the Stanford Institute for Higher Education Research. In recent years, he has devoted himself to consulting on budgeting, resource allocation, and quality in higher education. Dr. Massy has authored countless articles and three books on these topics. There is no one more qualified for this assignment than Bill Massy.

Dr. Massy first visited Le Moyne in February to collect relevant documents and information, meet with engaged groups, ask questions, and listen. After much study, reflection, and analysis, he returned in May, again met with many groups, shared his preliminary thoughts, and continued to listen and study. Dr. Massy will return three weeks from today to present his final report and recommendations. That report will be shared on campus and with the Board of Trustees. We will deliberate and then I will present a proposal to the Board.

My record demonstrates that I have long been a strong and successful proponent of a well-compensated faculty. This commitment will not change, nor will my commitment to best practices in compensation across the entire organization.

I appreciate the sacrifices that have been made by everyone at Le Moyne this year in foregoing a pay raise during a time of extraordinary economic distress around the world. With a sharp decline in our primary sources of operating revenue, last year was financially challenging. Through organization-wide sacrifice, we were able to balance multiple priorities: we kept our tuition increase below the national average, provided promotion raises, and fully funded an unusually large number of faculty sabbaticals. We were among the few colleges and universities in this country, indeed in the world, that were not forced to furlough, lay off, or terminate employees, nor did we trim expenses by cutting back on employee benefits, as so many others have done. I am proud of what we were able to pull together and accomplish.

The Third Lingering Issue is Facilities

The OneLeMoyne documents call for a vibrant campus delivering excellence throughout its various programs, in facilities that bespeak our commitment to academic excellence.

The College has made a substantial investment in its residence halls, totaling \$21 million over the last eleven years. Although our student living quarters are still somewhat modest, this investment was overdue and brought our living areas up to where they must be to remain competitive. This past summer we made some small investments in this room and other areas around campus. We also began work on the self-funded plaza project and the long anticipated turf field project that is funded, in part, through the generosity of our alumni as well as government grants.

It is now time to turn our attention to other areas of the campus, particularly our academic spaces. Substantial deferred maintenance coupled with the lack of a comprehensive understanding of existing facilities, their condition, current usage, and future needs is beginning to hamper the College in its ability to attract students and faculty in their ability to deliver the curriculum. Through recent investments in external studies of our various spaces and their utilization, in addition to benchmarking analysis, we will soon be prepared to plot a sustainable course for prioritizing investments based on the OneLeMoyne vision. After a process of consultation on campus we should have a multi-year plan in place by the end of the year.

Allow me also to note that our top priorities, based on OneLeMoyne conversations thus far, are the Science Complex and a replacement for the beloved and interaction facilitating Dolphin Den that was removed some years ago. It is my intention to begin construction on at least these two projects next summer. What else might be done and when is dependent on this year's deliberations and our debt capacity.

Conclusion

Today we pause to celebrate the incredible achievements of the past year and also to look to the work ahead. This coming year we will complete the first phase of the initiative that will set our future course—OneLeMoyne—and resolve three lingering issues that have impeded our path towards preeminence: revising the Core curriculum, updating and professionalizing our personnel review and compensation practices, and addressing critical facilities needs. In addition to these significant undertakings, there is other important work to be done, including the determination of how to structure the McDevitt Gift and the McDevitt Chairs, studying the imminent InterCollegiate Athletic Consulting report and deciding the appropriate divisional classification for the College, closing the Achieving New Heights Campaign, and conducting two vice presidential searches.

There is no time to waste.

As a sociologist and one who has led large and complex organizations, I understand that change is often difficult and sometimes feared. But it is also—and I stress this—inevitable. It is part of the human condition. Indeed, change is already upon us. We must rise to its challenges and find the opportunities within them.

In a recently published article titled, "A Call to Link Arms," Gordon Gee, President of The Ohio State University, observes that:

[The] past cannot serve as our compass for the future. . . . While giving deference to our proud history, our challenge today is radical reformation. Change at the margins will not do. The choice is this: reinvention or extinction. . .

Gee continues:

We now have the opportunity and the *responsibility* to make sophisticated choices about our future, and we must do so *together*. This is a defining moment in higher education, but each and every one of us must have the personal courage, the fortitude that is required. (Gee, *The Presidency*, Spring 2009, p. 18)

As I conclude, I thank you for so deeply and profoundly embracing OneLeMoyne and for your generous and warm welcome of me and my family into the Le Moyne community. Your hospitality, gifts, notes, and calls expressing support and encouragement inspire me and spur me on as the president of our rapidly advancing Catholic, Jesuit College. I have an ambitious agenda for Le Moyne, but it is one that I know we can achieve. Here again [Fr. Monan's Inauguration Week Lecture](#) is instructive. He noted that Le Moyne is at "the definitive turning of a page" where there will be no limits to the progress that is possible. True, focused, institution-wide collaboration, and its consequent release of creative energy, lie just ahead for us.

May God bless you and our College.