



# 2011 Presidential Inauguration Address

by David W. Burcham, President

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It is truly wonderful to look out from this podium today and see so many of you here to share this special occasion. I am honored that so many presidents from other institutions have joined us. And I am particularly happy to see presidents from our fellow Jesuit institutions who have become my colleagues and my friends, Fathers Michael Engh of Santa Clara University, Steve Privett of the University of San Francisco, and Steve Sundborg from Seattle University. I also extend a special welcome to Jonathan Veitch, president of Occidental College, my alma mater, as well as that of my wife Chris and my two sisters, Cathy and Mary.

Finally I welcome Max Nikias, president of USC, the alma mater of Chris' and my two children, Stacy and David, and our daughter-in-law, Gina. And Max is just returning part of the considerable investment we made with graduation.

I extend my gratitude to all of those who have entrusted me to lead this university over the next several years. Especially to the chair of the Board of Trustees, Chad Dreier, and the other members of the board, the members of the Presidential Search Committee, and the chair, Kathleen Aikenhead. Father John McGarry, provincial of the California Province, and Father Robert Scholla, rector of LMU's Jesuit Community.

Now, I also want to thank my wonderful family and friends, many of whom have traveled long distances ... . And I especially thank my terrific parents-

in-law, Marjorie and Joe Grinnell from Minneapolis, Minnesota. Your presence means much to Chris and to me.

I also want to thank those from the LMU community who just have delivered those thoughtful charges. I pledge to each of you and to the constituencies that you represent, that I will work tirelessly on behalf of our university.

I've done a little research on inauguration speeches, and I've learned the following. President Clinton's first inaugural address was only 14 minutes long. His second stretched to 22 minutes. President George W. Bush's first inaugural speech was 15 minutes long, but his second lasted 21 minutes. Aren't you all glad that I only get to do this once?

There are close to 4,500 degree granting colleges and universities in this country that enroll over 19 million students. Most of these school communities think of themselves as somehow unique, and they struggle to find a niche, a focus that they can market in an ever-competitive world. But a recent study by Professors Richard Arum and Josipa Roksa, suggest that perhaps we should return to first principles as we examine our pedagogies and programs. Arum and Roksa conclude that growing numbers of students are sent to college at increasingly higher costs, but for a large proportion of them the gains in critical thinking, complex reasoning, and written communication are either exceedingly small or empirically nonexistent.

We in higher education, we at LMU, should be asking ourselves, are we doing our jobs? Are we providing an education that will sustain our graduates for life? What are we doing right? What more should we be doing? As we celebrate our first 100 years and begin looking toward our future, these questions are paramount. Next week, I will launch a strategic planning process with the appointment of a steering committee. This committee will gather data, solicit views from faculty staff and other constituencies, and address critical questions and issues. We will prepare a strategic plan to guide us over the next several years. We will make important decisions about our resources, about the allocation of those resources, and about our programs. We will return to first principles.

Now, long-range planning may seem a daunting task in light of the rapidly changing environment in which we live. In just three decades, since the time I was a student at Loyola Law School, advances in information technology and communications have transformed almost every aspect of our lives, the way we work, receive information, watch television, listen to music, and keep in touch with our family members. Today there are 7 billion people on the planet using 5 billion smartphones and other handheld mobile devices. Fifteen years ago no one had heard of a social network. Two months ago, Twitter messages helped precipitate the fall of the dictator. Couple transformative changes like these in our culture with the continuing challenges posed by economic upheavals and uncertainty and mapping a course for higher education seemingly resembles solving a Rubik's Cube

puzzle. But we at LMU are fortunate. We already have a framework in place, an approach to guide us that has endured and has proven itself time and time again for centuries.

For over 450 years, Jesuit pedagogy has focused on education of the whole person, on challenging students to integrate the intellectual, the spiritual and the social dimensions of their lives. As we begin our strategic planning process, education of the whole person will be our touchstone; it is our foundation. I will direct the strategic planning steering committee to focus on three broad areas as they begin their work. Now, not completely coincidentally, these are the same three areas I would like to discuss very briefly over the next few minutes. I've learned in my time at LMU that the Jesuits lay claim to the rule that a talk should have three points. I certainly do not want to create discord by questioning this claim. But I will point out that my late father, a Presbyterian pastor, drummed the same lesson into me by word and by example over the formative years of my life, and the lesson has stuck. So three points you get.

As we chart our direction, we must focus on these three areas: academic excellence; enhancement of our Catholic, Jesuit, and Marymount identity and mission; and the strategic management of our resources. Our overarching job as a university is to develop and maintain a culture of excellence in everything that we do. Professors, you must lead the way, along with associate deans, the deans, and the academic administrators. The commitment to excellence begins with individuals, and then we must engineer ways for it to spread to systems and to structures.

We will develop strategies to continue our move toward excellence and to concentrate on several key ingredients of excellence. Above all, above all, our students will be the center of our planning efforts. On this score we must be satisfied that our various courses of study possess sufficient rigor, and that our students, no matter what their majors, are being academically challenged and encouraged to stretch their intellects and their imaginations. We must be satisfied that the courses that we as a university determine are so important that we require them of all students -- in other words, our core curriculum -- that these courses are resourced in a way that reflects this university determination.

We must strengthen our commitment to diversity, not as a peripheral aspect of enrollment management, not as a statistic, but rather as an integral part of academic excellence. We must explore new structures in ways for students and faculty to engage in interdisciplinary work, because, while 16th century notions of the structure of knowledge certainly have continued relevance for much of what we do, the vexing issues our graduates will face require them to be comfortable and conversant in a variety of disciplines.

And because we are all members of a shrinking global community, we must develop strategy to increase our engagement with the world beyond our

borders, providing increased opportunities for students and for faculty to pursue international study and dialogue. And because excellent graduate programs are vitally important, both in their own right as well as enhancing the academic climate university-wide, we must develop a comprehensive strategy for our graduate division and resource it appropriately. In other words, we will return to first principles.

We can't talk about academic excellence without addressing our Catholic and Jesuit/Marymount identity and mission, because our mission and identity should not be viewed as separate and apart from our drive toward academic excellence. Indeed, excellence is and has been a central feature of our Ignatian heritage. We will examine carefully our current programs dedicated to our distinctly Catholic, Jesuit, Marymount identity, and determine what additional effort and resources are necessary. We will consider, for example, the feasibility of establishing a center on the Catholic intellectual tradition. We will examine additional ways -- additional ways -- that the Jesuit community and the Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary, and the Sisters of St. Joseph can be integrated into all university life. We will examine the manner in which we bring to life our dedication to the service of faith and the promotion of justice.

As we have heard, our students perform exceptional service to the various service organizations and other student groups, the Center for Service and Action, and Campus Ministry. In fact, two weeks ago we designated an entire week highlighting this aspect of our Ignatian mission. The week culminated in a day of service in which over 600 students, faculty, staff, and alumni worked at four different sites. Chris and I visited all four sites, beginning with the Midnight Mission in the heart of skid row. We helped serve over 1,700 lunches to the homeless who flocked to this center on a Saturday morning.

As I was preparing to serve one of the patrons, an elderly woman, she smiled at me and asked, "What are you doing here?" Such a simple but profound question, what are you doing here? It forced me to think about and reflect upon my small act of service and what it means to care about others and give back to the community. It would cause me to reflect on our mission. It reminded me of the values that I learned from my mother and my father, and what drew me to LMU.

These are the values at the core of our mission. And as we examine ways to strengthen the execution of our mission, we must make certain that we continue to provide the leadership and the programs that encourage our students not only to act, not only to perform service, but to take time and to reflect upon their acts of service. Such reflection inevitably leads -- inevitably leads -- to a much deeper understanding of faith, of purpose, and of meaning.

We must talk about finances for a little bit. The pursuit of many of the strategic initiatives identified in the planning process will require additional resources. We will have very difficult decisions to make in terms of the sequencing of the initiatives and the vigor with which we pursue them. I intend to make these decisions a little easier by raising a lot of money; you can help. And our fundraising efforts will be largely driven by the strategic plan. In fact, our first major effort is already underway. I'm happy to report that last week the Los Angeles City Council unanimously approved our 20-year Master Plan. The first project under the plan is our new life sciences building. By the way, I would be remiss if I didn't say we have many naming opportunities available in that building.

Following completion of the funding for this important project most of our fundraising efforts will be devoted to the people- and the program-oriented initiatives identified in the plan. What this means is we'll be raising money for student scholarships, for faculty support, and for new programs and new centers. This will be challenging, but it will be incredibly exciting.

In May, we will officially begin a yearlong celebration of this university's centennial. LMU has a proud and honorable history, and as its 15<sup>th</sup> president, I promise to work tirelessly with our students, our faculty, staff, regents, trustees, and alumni, to preserve LMU's Jesuit and Marymount traditions and its commitment to academic excellence and to education of the whole person. Extraordinary opportunities lie ahead. Our time, LMU's time, has arrived. We are a dynamic university with a powerful mission located in a world-class city. And, our region and the world beyond desperately need supremely well-educated, ethical, leaders with deep moral convictions rooted in faith. And in partnership with each of you, that is exactly what we will continue to provide. Thank you very much.