A Tribute to Our Presidents

June 1, 2021
AJCU Board of Directors Meeting
Rev. Philip L. Boroughs, S.J.
College of the Holy Cross
Thank you
Fr. Boroughs for your service
as pastor, pilgrim and president.
Reflections from Dr. Edward Peck

Vice President for University Mission & Identity at John Carroll University
I first met Michael during my initial interview for the Provost position at John Carroll. I remember my impressions from that first meeting: Here is a man who cares about people as much as he cares about the important work we are about. In working with Michael over these past two years, my initial impression has been confirmed over and over again. Michael embodies a balance between cura personalis and cura apostolica. Nowhere is this more evident than in his decision to come to John Carroll as its 25th President. With his strong record of leadership in higher education at large and rather elite universities, Michael could have gone most anywhere. He chose, instead, to come to JCU because it offered the best chance to come to know, personally and directly, the people of the institution – John Carroll’s faculty, staff, and, as importantly, students – and be in relationship with them in service together. I’ve seen this play out both in our daily work and in our strategic decisions. It is his deep sense of mission and service that has made it such a blessing to share our time together, to serve with him, and to learn from him.

I will forever be grateful to Michael for offering me the chance to come to John Carroll as its Provost. I have come to respect and love his way of proceeding, his personal integrity, and his deep caring for all. He has offered me a model for leadership that I hope to attain.

Dr. Steven Herbert, Provost & AVP
John Carroll University
Reflections from Rev. James Bretzke, S.J., Professor of Moral Theology at John Carroll University
I have greatly appreciated my friendship with Michael during his years at John Carroll. We Jesuits at JCU have often enjoyed the company of Michael and his wonderful wife, Jill, in our home – Schell House Jesuit Community. At the time of the death of Rev. Jerry Sabo, S.J., longtime Russian and Slovak professor, Michael very kindly stopped by our house with bottles of wine in order to express his condolences and his admiration for Jerry. It is also striking to me how Michael has seriously studied and taken on as his own the Ignatian heritage of the university, particularly through his engagement in the ICP Program. I recall his heartfelt participation in discussions I led with ICP participants. As Michael embarks upon new adventures in life, we in the Jesuit community wish Jill and him all of the best that the good Lord can offer.

Rev. Tom Pipp, S.J., Rector
Schell House Jesuit Community
Reflections from Dr. Tiffany Galvin Green, Vice President for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion at John Carroll University
Congratulations to Rev. Brian F. Linnane, S.J. for his years of service to Loyola University Maryland. For more than half a century, Loyola has enjoyed amazing leadership. I have benefited from a perspective of this guidance both personally and professionally. As a student, I saw how Rev. Joseph Sellinger, S.J. transformed Loyola from an all-male commuter college and laid the foundation upon which this great institution is built. As a young alumnus, I could see how Rev. Harold Ridley, S.J., used his charm and vision to set new heights and aspirations for Loyola as a jewel in the crown of Jesuit higher education. And as a fellow trustee, I watched as Fr. Linnane entered the presidency, worked tirelessly to enhance the institution, and defended it from challenges in many directions. And now, as someone who gets to work daily with Brian, I am so pleased to see the many new faces and voices that he has invited to the table, as a new chapter for a great university is being written.

Besides the designation change from college to university, or the groundbreaking establishment of MESSINA, Loyola has been transformed because of Fr. Linnane. We now have a school of education, an athletic campus, new residence halls, and academic and science buildings. We have raised more resources for the university to focus on students, and we asserted ourselves as “anchored in Baltimore” with the focus of service and faith in our community. And if all of that was not enough, Loyola has weathered a recession and multiple pandemics, all of which made us stronger, under the leadership of Fr. Linnane.

Fr. Linnane did this by supporting others, uplifting the values of the university, focusing on people, and their inherent worth and dignity. He invited others not just to have a seat at the table, but to have a voice in decision-making. I am proud to have served as your Vice President & Special Assistant and I hope that you will look fondly on these years of transformational change at our Loyola.

After these many years of working together, I will need to adjust to the idea that you are no longer at the helm of my alma mater. Best wishes to Fr. Linnane in his new role as President Emeritus of Loyola University Maryland. What does the next chapter hold in store?

Robert D. Kelly, Vice President & Special Assistant to the President Loyola University Maryland
Loyola Athletics Recognizes Fr. Linnane
It has been an honor and a pleasure to work closely with Fr. Linnane over the past 16 years. He leaves behind a tremendous legacy and I feel blessed to have been a part of it. I have learned so much from him, both personally and professionally, and I will miss him everyday. But more than being the President of Loyola and my boss, he is a dear friend and I know we will stay in close touch. I have heard Fr. Linnane say often that being the President of Loyola has been one of the great joys of his life. Working alongside him has been one the great joys of mine.

Thank you, Fr. Linnane.

Terrence Sawyer
Sr. Vice President of Advancement
Loyola University Maryland
I am honored to pay tribute to Rev. Brian F. Linnane, S.J., president of Loyola University Maryland. I had the privilege of serving as vice president of student affairs, interim vice president of advancement, executive vice president and acting president during my twelve years under Fr. Linnane’s direct supervision at Loyola. I mention this not to expound upon my tenure, but to demonstrate the great faith Fr. Linnane had in advancing women and vice presidents into key leadership roles. It is no wonder that three vice presidents and a dean, who have served under Fr. Linnane, have been appointed presidents of four Catholic universities, and there will no doubt be more presidents to come.

Fr. Linnane made incredible strides to bring greater diversity to Loyola long before these efforts to diversify the student body, faculty and staff became well known in Jesuit higher education. In recent years, six African American vice presidents of Jesuit institutions were nurtured at Loyola: the impact of this will continue to inspire students and staff throughout the Jesuit network.

However, Fr. Linnane’s tenure was much more than advancing vice presidents, as he consistently led Loyola to greater levels of excellence. The Messina program, a living and learning seminar, was born out of Fr. Linnane’s vision of engaging all first-year students from the very first day of college. This wholistic approach combined an academic seminar and outside experiences team-taught by a faculty member and a student affairs administrator. The award-winning program has become part of Loyola’s brand and has continued to accelerate retention and student outcomes. Messina is mission-driven, embodying the best of Jesuit education, but it required great resources and leadership to achieve the quality and recognition of academic credit and engagement of faculty and staff.

This is just one example of so many of Fr. Linnane’s inspirational achievements. This list of achievements and indicators of excellence is very long indeed. Sometimes we may wonder in our own work…are we making a difference? Will it have a lasting impact? And will it be sustainable? However, Fr. Linnane was convinced that investing in the Jesuit mission, remaining student-centered, engaging the faculty and staff, and considering students in every decision would have an incredible impact on everyone and ultimately on the reputation and viability of Loyola.

Fr. Linnane had big shoes to fill when he began his presidency before he turned 50 years old, but there is no doubt that his legacy will be remembered as one of incredible impact on Jesuit education and the thousands of lives that his leadership impacted.

Susan M. Donovan, President, Bellarmine University
Former Executive Vice President, Loyola University Maryland
Rev. Kevin F. O’Brien, S.J.
Santa Clara University
Fr. Kevin O'Brien, S.J. brought Ignatian spirituality to life for generations of Jesuit Leadership Seminar (now known as the AJCU Leadership Institute) alums. He led us through the Examen and introduced us to the Spiritual Exercises, inviting us into a deeper connection with the spiritual roots of our tradition. At the Seminar, we knew that we could always count on Fr. O'Brien’s support. No matter how busy he was, he generously gave time and talent to the formation of his lay colleagues. Fr. O'Brien challenged and inspired us to live our vocations in Jesuit higher education with joy, and to leave our time together, in the words of St. Ignatius, to "Go and set the world on fire."

Reflections from Jeanne F. Lord. JD, Ed.D.
Director, AJCU Leadership Institute
On behalf of the Board of Trustees of Seattle University (and personally), I am honored to offer this tribute to Rev. Stephen Sundborg, S.J., as he retires from twenty-four years of outstanding and distinguished service as President of SU. Fr. Steve has presided over the continued enhancement of the university’s academic reputation, consistently increasing its national and regional rankings. He has developed key resources in support of a growing student enrollment, including building a new Student Center, a new Law School, a Center for Performing Arts, a Library and Learning Commons, a Fitness Center, and a new Center for Science and Innovation. Fr. Steve authored SU’s Mission Statement and developed strategic opportunities for the university community to carry out its mission, championing endeavors such as the Costco Scholarship Fund for highly qualified underrepresented students, the Seattle University Youth Initiative to strengthen education and support systems for 1,000 neighborhood youth, and becoming the first U.S. Jesuit university to commit to divesting fossil fuel investments.

Throughout the many accomplishments of his presidency, Fr. Steve has remained committed to “being in service to our students,” providing tens of thousands of students with a distinctive Jesuit education, so they may realize their full potential and become the individuals they are meant to be. In naming Fr. Steve President Emeritus, the Board recognized that his service has gone far beyond the normal duties and responsibilities of his appointment; has had an extraordinary impact on the university and the broader community; has demonstrated exceptional commitment and contributions to the university; has exemplified the highest standards of personal and professional integrity, civic responsibility, vision, and leadership; and has advanced the Catholic and Jesuit mission of the university.

It has been an honor and joy for me to work side by side with Fr. Steve for these past several years – to learn and observe his deep commitment to our institution and every person in it. He is the definition of Servant Leadership as seen in his caring, discerning, and mission-driven decision-making. We will miss his wisdom, his perseverance and his wonderful sense of humor and I wish him well on his next journey.

Nicole Piasecki, Chair, Board of Directors
Seattle University
Recently, I was asked to share a memory about a time I was proud of Fr. Steve. Over the past twenty-four years, I have so many memories and interactions with him. In my capacity as past Chair of the Alumni Board of Governors and Chair of the Board of Regents, we have spent many hours together working on behalf of Seattle University. I have always admired Fr. Steve for his servant leadership, his integrity, his inclusive spirit and desire to do the right thing. **A few years ago, Fr. Steve was the keynote speaker for an MLK Prayer Breakfast. His speech was about “White Privilege.” Making a speech like that took a lot of courage. Most people in the audience did not want to hear that message. As I sat there listening to him speak, I was so proud that he was the president of my university.** I have watched Fr. Steve make many courageous decisions over the years.

Fr. Steve’s leadership has been monumental in shaping the reputation of SU as a great school in our region and beyond. One need only take a stroll across the campus to see his legacy. One example of many is the Seattle University Youth Initiative, which illuminates the essence of our mission.

Anita M. Crawford-Willis, Seattle Municipal Court Judge
Former Chair, Seattle University Board of Regents

Twenty-four years ago, I served on the Board of Trustees for Seattle University. As a Board member, I was asked to participate in the “Search Committee” charged with finding the candidate to assume the role of our next president. We would be replacing a leader, Rev. William Sullivan, S.J., who had led the institution through difficult and perilous times. So, those of us on the committee understood the challenge.

How do we identify exactly the right person who embodies all the attributes we considered essential? The advocacy for education, the leadership skills, financial management capabilities and, above all, the strong Jesuit ideals.

Wow! Did we hit the “lotto.” We found Fr. Steve. **Over the past 24 years, he had led the University to levels we never thought possible.** During this period, Fr. Steve has become a personal friend and confidant for my family and me. **I cannot overstate the respect and love I have for this man, who personifies the Jesuit mission of “Education for Justice.”**

Jim Sinegal, Former Trustee
Seattle University
As the longest serving vice president under Fr. Steve Sundborg, S.J., I am both honored and privileged to share a few thoughts about him as he winds down his tenure as president of Seattle University. Fr. Steve, as he is affectionately known to all, has provided exceptional leadership to the students, faculty, staff, and alumni of the university for 24 years. As a person who came to this role with very little professional administrative experience in higher education, he has excelled in every aspect of his responsibilities. As president, Fr. Steve successfully led two major capital campaigns (raising over half a billion dollars) that resulted in the construction of a new student center, performing arts center, leadership pavilion, library learning commons, and the new Jim and Janet Sinegal Center for Science and Innovation. Beyond bricks and mortar, Fr. Steve established the nationally recognized Center for Community Engagement, returned our Intercollegiate Athletics program to Division I, and has awarded over 50,000 diplomas to deserving Seattle University graduates.

All that said, Fr. Steve is likely to be remembered most as a Jesuit, Catholic priest, deeply committed to his faith and to empowering our students to go forth to create a more just and humane world. Fr. Steve is a profoundly spiritual man, a prolific reader (he starts every day reading poetry), a walker (Green Lake on weekends), and a hiker (Cascade Mountains), with a taste for good bourbon. He is as “at home in his own skin” as any person I’ve known, yet he has been willing to reexamine his own thinking on the issues that occupy the minds of our students, faculty and staff, holding regular open forums and hosting office visits to actively listen to the voices of others, particularly those feeling most marginalized in our campus community.

Seattle University owes a great deal to Fr. Steve for his courageous and visionary leadership over the past 24 years. The university, under the leadership of our new president, Eduardo Peñalver, is poised to become one of the most innovative and progressive Jesuit and Catholic universities in the world, in large part due to the accomplishments of Fr. Sundborg.

On a personal note, Fr. Steve has been an exemplary boss, colleague, friend and mentor to me throughout my entire professional life. He believed in me and my gifts and talents, even when I doubted them, and he has challenged me to more fully embrace the “Magis,” to give my very best for and with others.

He is quite a storyteller, sharing with incoming students that they are likely to hear him tell four to five stories during their time at Seattle U. While most of these stories will be lost when Fr. Steve steps down in June, I have reserved the right to carry on the telling of the one commonly referred to as “The Greatest Generation.”

Thanks for everything, Fr. Steve. You will be deeply missed!

May the road rise to meet you
May the wind be at your back
May the sun shine warm upon your face
May the rain fall softly on your fields
And until we meet again
May you keep safe
In the gentle loving arms of God

Dr. Timothy Leary, Executive Vice President, Seattle University
It has been a blessing to have had Fr. Steve Sundborg, S.J. as our President for 24 years, and I have had the honor of working with him as dean of the business school for the past 20 years!

My first memory of Fr. Steve is, of course, the first time we “met” in 2000, which was by video conference as part of the dean search process. Fr. Steve was overseas when I did my campus visit, so we did a make-up by using what then was a very exotic and inconvenient process. Now, thanks to Zoom, this is a piece of cake. One thing we both remember is the camera was not anywhere close to the screen you were viewing, so we were both seeing each other staring off at another corner of the room. Very strange. Thankfully, technology has progressed since then!

In 2008, Fr. Steve and I were both able to visit the White House and meet President George W. Bush. It was in recognition of a program that had our students assisting local businesses in boosting their export sales. The President had to scold me for something I said, and Fr. Steve still takes great pleasure in reminding me about that.

In 2012, I had to attend a meeting in Rome at the Curia for the International Association of Jesuit Business Schools. Knowing that Fr. Steve had spent several years in Rome and was a big fan of all things Italian, my wife and I consulted with him about how to best spend our free time there. He provided all kinds of good advice, but the best advice was where to find the Caravaggios in the various churches of Rome. It was like a treasure hunt following that list and no doubt the highlight of our time in Rome!

Fr. Steve is very proud of his Alaskan roots. In 2018, my wife and I took a boat cruise in Alaska. When we were in Juneau, we checked out the house that Fr. Steve grew up in and sent him a picture of its current state. We also visited the Alaska State Museum, where there is a copy of the Alaska State Constitution that Fr. Steve’s father was a signatory to. That is another thing he is very proud of.

Fr. Steve has always been a strong supporter of the business school. He has been a great example for our students of a servant leader, and I especially appreciate his authenticity, humor, and humility. We have a long running inside joke wherein Fr. Steve says, “There is no finer school at SU than the Albers School,” which leaves everyone happy. Our faculty and staff interpret him as saying we are the best. The other schools just think he is patronizing us. A win-win for everyone and an important lesson for all university presidents!

Joseph M. Phillips, Dean, Albers School of Business and Economics
Seattle University
Rev. Michael J. Graham, S.J.
Xavier University
To say that Fr. Graham will be deeply missed by the entire Xavier community is an understatement. As is the platitude that he left his mark on the university. Over the course of his 20 years as President – and nearly 35 years at Xavier – the depth and breadth of Fr. Graham’s impact on Xavier, and all its component parts, are far too numerous to detail in one paragraph. Three examples of his incredible leadership and vision perhaps begin to paint the picture. The first and most important was his determination to imbed the Ignatian culture in every aspect of the university. He realized the need to ensure that Xavier will remain Jesuit to the core, no matter how many Jesuits are on campus. The second was his vision in taking Xavier to the Big East Conference. It has given Xavier a platform that has proven vital to its success. Finally, Fr. Graham is handing off to his successor, Colleen Hanycz, a stellar Higher Learning Commission report that provides her both a treasure trove of knowledge about Xavier, but also a road map for the near future. It is not just what Fr. Graham has accomplished (though there are many), but how he has done it that is the mark of a true leader and a man for others.

Barbara J. Howard, Esq., Former Chair, Trustees
Xavier University
It has been my honor and privilege to work alongside Xavier’s President, Rev. Michael J. Graham, S.J., as his Vice President for University Relations for the past 22 years. Nearly $600 million has been raised to help build our university during his two decades as President: more than 90% of what has been realized in the history of Xavier. The campus has been transformed, eight buildings have been constructed or restored, and more than 80 acres have been added. Twenty new programs have been developed, while the profile of our faculty and staff has been greatly enhanced. Fr. Graham was instrumental in helping us gain entry into the Big East Conference, which has provided visibility and exposure and enhanced our national recognition. Xavier is considered a treasured asset to our city and region thanks to the vision and on-going commitment of Fr. Graham to our community engagement. He also elevated awareness across campus for diversity and social justice issues. Fr. Graham has provided incredible servant leadership in all areas but, most important, as a Jesuit, Catholic priest, he has created a culture of compassion, Magis and Cura Personalis for our students, faculty, and staff. He will always be a part of the Xavier community and Xavier will forever be a part of him.

Gary Massa, Vice President of University Relations
Xavier University
While I can cite many accomplishments made by Fr. Graham during his time at Xavier, what I will remember most is the profound influence he has had on my personal and professional development. I recognized that Fr. Graham was playing a unique place in my life well before becoming the Vice President for Institutional Diversity and Inclusion and reporting to him directly. He will probably never understand the full extent of his impact on me, an African American woman raised in the South, during the Jim Crow era. You see, he gave me more than just an opportunity to advance in my career in a way I could not have imagined: I was afforded the space and freedom to find myself and become the person that I am today. That is a timeless, invaluable gift that I will always treasure and for which I feel deep gratitude. Fr. Graham deserves to know this, and I hope one day to find just the right words to share with him.

Dr. Janice B. Walker
Vice President for Institutional Diversity & Inclusion
Xavier University
Rev. Scott R. Pilarz, S.J.
The University of Scranton
Peggy Condron was on the Scranton Board when Scott Pilarz was chosen to head the University for the first time. Then, I became the head of the Board under Scott before he went to Marquette. Peggy and I became close friends with him. He came to visit our home overnight several times, right up to the end. We miss him very much.

Kip Condron, Former Chair, Board of Directors
The University of Scranton

While we first met in 2002, it felt like Fr. Pilarz was always our great friend, confidant, and inspiration since the beginning of time. We saw him take over The University of Scranton as President in 2003 and immediately transform its infrastructure, academics, and spiritual initiatives. This was a tall task in itself, but whenever he had a free moment, he was busy building; even more, this included heartful great friendships across all of Scranton’s constituencies.

We were particularly blessed for him to baptize our son, Jonathan, and shared many great moments together at the Jersey shore. Scott was different, had a gift to connect with others, and we will miss and remember him forever.

John and Jackie Dionne, Trustees
The University of Scranton
Scott was a Jesuit priest who had a profound impact on everything he touched. I had the privilege of working by his side for the past 15 years. He was a dear friend and mentor. While he will always be remembered for his incredible intellect, leadership abilities and unprecedented oratory skills, I will remember him most for his love of teaching and working with undergraduate college students. He woke up everyday motivated by how he could impact students; both those he taught personally and those thousands over the years he influenced at Georgetown, Marquette, Georgetown Prep, and his beloved University of Scranton. He was never more alive than when in the presence of students. No doubt his legacy will live on for generations. Oh, and yes, he loved to laugh.

Tom MacKinnon, Vice President for University Advancement
The University of Scranton

I sat with Scott as he recorded the announcement of his ALS diagnosis. After his prepared message, he quoted St. Ignatius, who wrote that we must “…find God in all things.” While I had heard those words countless times before, in that moment, I understood them. I will always remember Scott’s conviction as he said them – a conviction he would live every day until his last. Like anyone who knew Scott, well or even just a little, I feel a deep sense of loss, because he understood and loved us uniquely and joyously. While I’ll reflect on my friendship with Scott for years to come, in these early days since his passing, I’ve thought most about his passion for poetry. He most loved poems that capture the spark or essence of what makes us human and, in doing so, give us a glimpse of the divine. Scott was that spark and that glimpse for me.

Gerry Zaboski, Vice Pres. for Enrollment Management & External Affairs
The University of Scranton
Scott Pilarz has influenced my personal and professional life in ways that make me a better husband, father, and administrator. His focus on the student experience and its transformational power inspired all of us at Scranton. The word that I have thought most about since March is “Love.” Scott loved Scranton, he loved Jesuit education, and he loved his family and friends.

I am grateful that we were able to share many moments together with our families. Scott was at all the big family events, including my nephew’s baptism. I’ll cherish the memories of sharing a meal with both of our parents and laughing together. He modeled for me and for so many that “Love is shown more in deeds than in words.”

Bobby Davis, Vice President for Student Life
The University of Scranton
Memories from AJCU Breakfasts, Dinners & More!
Thank you, from all of us at AJCU!

Fr. Mike Garanzini, SJ, Stephanie Russell, Deanna Howes Spiro, Jenny Smulson, Shelby Lauter, Joe DeFeo & Jeanne Lord