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## From the Editor: Daunting Challenges as We Move Ahead in Jesuit Education

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## From the Editor

# Daunting Challenges as We Move Ahead in Jesuit Education

July 1. In many settings, it marks a new beginning, a new start. Financially, of course, a new fiscal year often starts here. In our schools, too, we start gearing up for what is to come at the end of August when students return, classrooms come alive, and the empty in-box starts to fill. July 1 marks a lot of passages from the old to the new: a quick and informal survey of when new presidents begin their terms in our schools shows a great leaning towards July – at least 13 of the 28. (Some websites give only the year.)

A big news story from the *Omaha World-Herald* in June was brimming with optimism over the arrival of Daniel S. Hendrickson, S.J., as the new president of Creighton U. beginning on July 1 of this year. The writer, Kate Howard, had gone to Marquette, where Daniel was coming from, and interviewed students and colleagues about what they thought Creighton could expect in its new president. Students said that “he has an energy about him” and that he is “incredibly approachable” and “incredibly intelligent.” Colleagues noted “his commitment to Jesuit ideals” and “his ability to connect with people,” seeing these as “strong assets” for the new president. They said there would be a learning curve but trusted that Daniel was up to it.

The optimism was great, and I am sure similar reports and sentiments filled other campuses and local news outlets as new leadership took over. On July 1 St. Joseph’s welcomed Mark Reed as its new president; he had been serving at Fairfield. And on the same day, long-time faculty member John Pelissero became interim president of Loyola Chicago. And at Loyola Maryland, Susan Donovan, already serving as executive vice president, began a six-month term as acting president.

A month earlier, on June 1, Christopher Puto took over as president of Spring Hill College. He had graduated from Spring Hill in 1964 and brought with him experience as a faculty member and administrator at other universities. And Loyola Marymount welcomed its new president, Timothy Law Snyder, who moved there from Loyola Maryland.

On July 1 I was sitting at my desk in New York, pounding away at my computer, doing final edits to this issue of *Conversations*. Its title, “Daunting Challenges,” well represents the content of the articles. From 11 of the 28 AJCU schools, authors write to describe the challenging reality of university education today and the tough issues we face as we move ahead. What is technology doing to our traditional education: can one teach/learn deep values from a screen? How do we include those left behind or left out of the great experience of intellectual, social, and moral growth we propose to offer? What is the proper response to the ever growing shadow of college

sports? How can schools manage exploding expenses, and how can students work out strategies to pay off staggering debt built up over four years and find a job equal to what they can do with their education? To balance all the questions and tough times, we present two stories of new initiatives – Georgetown’s Red House and Loyola Chicago’s new Arrupe College.

These issues are just some of what these new presidents will face as their days fill up with conferences and meetings and reports. And these questions are pertinent likewise for all faculty and levels of administration. They have come to our attention before, of course, but seeing them published together is somewhat daunting. But that is why we explore and analyze and hold conversations. Moving ahead with the great mission of Jesuit education is not beyond us. It simply demands our awareness of what is happening, determination to move ahead, and gratitude for the opportunities that our great students embody. These students trust us, and their families trust us. And we will serve them with all the immense talent our schools represent.

One day not long after Daniel Hendrickson’s presidency was announced, I ran into him briefly in passing. I caught his glance, and all I could think to say was “thank you!” We moved on, but I think he knew what I meant. I’ll be more explicit here, and I say “thank you” to Daniel again, to Susan Donovan, to John Pelissero, to Christopher Puto, to Mark Reed, and to Timothy Law Snyder. And I extend a sincere “thank you” to all the other presidents, long-term or recent, who lead us in facing the great challenges we mention in this issue. That “thank you” moves outward to all the faculty and administrators, support staff, boards, and benefactors. The work you do for our students and their future is beyond description, but it well deserves all the gratitude we can express.

And thank you, students, for the challenge you eagerly present, for the trust you show, and for the future you promise. You’re the greatest! ■

Edward W. Schmidt, S.J., editor



More thanks are in order. Thanks to Mark Scalese, S.J., who designed the magnificent cover for this issue, a twisting path indeed. And thanks to Diana Owen, who was a great part of launching our new website.

Please note that in this issue you will find a letter from our seminar chair, Patrick Howell, S.J., which directs you to this new website and has other important things to say!