



## University Address 2015

### Leading the path in Higher Education Transformation – The Modern Urban University

Ladies and gentlemen, colleagues and friends, esteemed guests, welcome to NLU's 2015 Fall Connection.

Fall Connection represents one of the many great traditions at National Louis University. It is a time when we come together to rekindle friendships, engage in great dialogue, and we prepare for the year ahead. This year we extended our university Connection to allow our faculty to have an opportunity to spend time immersed in preparing for the new academic year. We were also fortunate to hear comments from both our Provost, Dr. Hilsabeck and our board chair Scott Smith.

In addition, the President has the privilege to provide the campus community with information about the state of the university and to outline and reiterate the direction of the institution at Connection.

I would like to begin my address today by thanking all of you for all of the dedication and service you provide to National Louis and our students. I realize how incredibly fortunate I am to be part of this authentic community whose kind and collaborative spirit and commitment to excellence and innovation truly distinguishes us as a university. We are a creative, impatient, diverse, dauntless, and humble institution. Basically, this is my kind of place and I thank all of you for the honor of serving as the president of this institution. Your continued trust and commitment are beyond humbling.

This year, my first attempt to pull together my remarks was thwarted by an evil computer virus that destroyed all the work I had poured into my address for weeks – it actually destroyed every office document I had. After a complete meltdown which happily was only witnessed by my husband, I picked myself up and started again. (Of course this wasn't before he empathetically suggested watching a totally escapist mind numbing action flick with a bit of wine.) But I have to say, that upon reflection I realized I had truly internalized the values at NLU – we never give up and we always pick ourselves up and start again. So today, you will be subjected to “The State of the University Address – Take Two”.

My address today will be divided into four areas:

1. Highlights of some of our key accomplishments from the past year.
2. Review of some of the key forces impacting higher education today and our current state.
3. A picture of NLU's future as a leader and innovator in higher education in teaching, learning, service, and as a nationally recognized institution in professionally relevant education defining the road to a Modern Urban University.
4. A call to action

As I reflect upon our last year, it is clear that we had a year of great accomplishments on our campuses, by our faculty and staff, and of course, our students. We have much for which we can be proud. As a community we have come together and our teamwork and collaboration has paid dividends in new curriculum, better processes and recognition from external stakeholders. Financially we are on par to show positive earnings for the third year in a row and, albeit small, an increase in revenues over the prior year for the first time since 2010.

For the last three years we have been able to provide a 2% lump-sum contribution to all eligible, active participants in the TIAA-CREF "matching" plan as defined in the Plan document. In addition, we have been able to provide merit increases for faculty and staff and for the last two years we were able to increase our adjunct and overload pay rates.

We have continued to focus on our student experience, and our efforts are yielding great results as reflected in significant improvements on the Noel Levitz Student Satisfaction Survey. This year we successfully implemented a tool to help us focus on student retention – Starfish and as a result in three out of four terms we saw improvements in student retention. We increased our career support and started to track employment outcomes and our preliminary results suggest that 87% of NLU graduates are employed within 6 months. In addition, according to Linked-in, NLU is ranked among the top in universities that prepared students to attain jobs in their chosen fields – this was particularly noted for our education and human services programs.

Our student affairs office has brought renewed energy to the life of our students inside and outside of class – the city has truly become our campus as

we travel to the Art Institute, professional sports games, and engage in numerous other on and off campus experiences. Throughout our community, there is a strong commitment to help students get the support they need to be successful. Our Library and Learning Support area has increased its academic support services through test preparation and remedial support for students yielding improved pass rates on TAP tests and addressing student learning gaps successfully. These efforts have contributed to overall improvement in annual retention.

With respect to program development, we developed over 100 new courses for the second straight year, many of which are on-line. We launched our focus on entrepreneurship in the undergraduate business program, we updated our master degree program on Public Policy and Administration, and updated many of our curricula to ensure that they were appropriately focused to prepare students to be competitive in their professional careers. We received a number of program approvals within the National College of Education relative to the changing regulatory requirements for teacher preparation and endorsements. Just this week, we received approval for a middle school curriculum where we were recognized as the exemplar of a great program submission. Hats off to Ginny Jagla who led the charge on this application. Moreover, this year, more than any before, our progress toward providing and using an academic dashboard has been unprecedented – under the leadership of the Provost and the academic cabinet new program data sheets have been distributed and are becoming part of our way of doing business at the university – from student satisfaction, to retention, to enrollment, data is being provided to help us focus on continuous improvement in all our learning experiences.

Our people across the organization continued to distinguish themselves through their work and a number were recognized through our promotion and tenure process. I'd like to ask the following individuals to stand up and be recognized here today.

**Promotions:**

Tim Collins Promotion to Full Professor (NCE)

Virginia Jagla Promotion to Full Professor (NCE)

Diane Salmon Promotion to Full Professor (NCE)

David SanFilippo Promotion to Associate Professor (CPSA)

**Promotion with Tenure**

Madi Phillips- Promotion to Associate Professor and Tenure (NCE)

Kamau Rashid - Promotion to Associate Professor and Tenure (NCE) (Fullbright Scholar in Africa)

W. Jason Stegemoller -Promotion to Associate Professor and Early Tenure (NCE)

**Emeritus Faculty**

G. Thomas Fox (NCE)

Alan Rossman (NCE)

Thomas Heaney (CPSA)

Randee Lawrence (CPSA)

Carole Kabel (Library)

Among many notable accomplishments this year was Dr. Brad Olsen who became the center of national attention for his multi-year battle with the American Psychological Association fighting against the policy that supported psychologists' involvement in the use of torture during interrogation. In addition, he was made a chieftain during his work in Africa.

As a whole we are fortunate to have a wonderful dedicated, caring and talented faculty. This past April, our institution implemented the first Annual Faculty Appreciation Month where student, staff, and the administration recognized and celebrated the talents of our faculty through a series of well-deserved events throughout the month. We look forward to making this an annual tradition for the institution.

We have also made a number of key hires and new appointments. The talent that we have been able to attract is quite impressive. I'd like to ask the following new members of our community to please stand and be welcomed:

Judah Viola – Dean CPSA

Robert Mueller – Dean, NCE

Carole Wood – VP IA

Aarti Dhupelia – VP Strategic Initiatives

Clyde “Rusty” Burnette – Exec Dir of PACE

Shannon Meggert – University Registrar

Rathenia Hunter – Dir of Student Financial Services

Beth Epstein- Rosenthal - Dir of Lifelong Learning Institute

There are many other new wonderful employees who have joined us this year – I believe I have met almost all of them in our employment orientations – I hear they are busily using their “Get out of Jail Free” cards across the institution. These cards were created to empower all employees to be leaders who make decisions to better serve our students. We want all employees to feel free to make the best decisions for students and not be paralyzed by the fear of making a mistake.

We have continued as an institution to roll up our sleeves and work in our communities recognizing the power that institutions of higher education have to impact and transform those communities – from our institutional month of service, to the schools where we work, to health centers, hospitals and businesses, NLU continues to find ways to build partnerships and programs that serve our students and our communities. Moreover, NLU hosted many wonderful conferences this year from the conference on Disabilities, Reading Recovery, Educelerate and Start-Up Weekend, Pulitzer Author event, the McCormick Center Conference on Early Childhood Leadership with a record breaking 700 participants, among others. All of these activities demonstrate how our institution participates in thought leadership and has a deep and abiding commitment to our surrounding communities – a commitment that was recognized as we achieved the Carnegie Community Engagement Classification this year.

Our Advancement department in collaboration with faculty and stakeholders across the institution has made great progress at attracting grants that continue to allow us to do our work. This year we were awarded a renewal on the TQP grant which was in excess of \$8M. This grant allows us to continue

our work on our teacher residency program in partnership with AUSL. We were awarded two NSF grants, one in collaboration with IIT and one that was awarded to Dr. Heidbrink for her pivotal work on the plight of immigrant children. The McCormick Foundation awarded us a \$1 million grant to fund our work with undergraduates and veterans. Our McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership continued to attract significant funding this year totaling over \$4M under Sue Offutt's leadership.

In addition, we have built stronger relationships with numerous foundations which are beginning to yield financial support. (Gates, Lumina, USA Funds, Hearst, Joyce, among others). In addition we are building stronger alumni engagement. We held a great REACH gala in May where we recognized four of our accomplished alumni in an event that raised over \$100,000 for the institution. We hosted an NCE reunion for students who had graduated over 40 years ago, and we reassembled our alumni board.

Through our capital grants from the state we have been able to make many improvements in our facilities. The completion of the Innovation Center on the third floor of our Chicago campus provides our faculty, staff and students an excellent space for collaboration and creativity. We are now in the process of creating 21<sup>st</sup> century learning classrooms at the Chicago campus with updated furniture that supports collaboration and updated technology and learning engagement tools. Our classes are designed without a designated "front" of the room as we move from the "sage on the stage" to the "guide on the side" focus on learning. Other classes will be built as we garner feedback from these new spaces.

As an institution, we are becoming recognized for our innovative approaches to teaching and learning. Our work focused on field-intensive teacher preparation programs is already receiving national attention. This past year when Diane Salmon, Ruth Friedman, Stu Carrier and Alison Hilsabeck were invited to share the Adaptive Cycles of Teaching model of teacher preparation at the Illinois State Board of Education, they received rave reviews for this competency based, field intensive, cloud based approach that focused on high leverage teaching practices. While Gery Chico sat as the head of ISBE he proclaimed that "everyone needed to hear about what NLU was doing." Moreover this past year NLU was invited to share this model and its transparent commitment to evaluate the effectiveness of teacher candidates with Joyce Foundation and members of the Steans Family, and the Gates Foundation. Just

last week, our field approach was showcased in an Eduventures article that described teacher preparation innovation at NLU. That focus on field intensive work pervades the college and it undoubtedly will continue to advance NLU's reputation as a national leader in teacher preparation. At the state level, Beth Purvis, Secretary of Education is bringing a team to see how NLU is making such terrific headway on the teacher preparation front.

For the last three years our institution has been working fervently to define pathways to successful undergraduate education. From the initial focus on a Harrison Program which was originated by George Litman to our focus on serving veterans and military connected families, our institution has undergone a journey which has culminated in what has been termed the Harrison Professional Pathways Program or HP3. HP3 is NLU's answer to the issues of affordability, access and student success. This past year a small ambitious team worked fervently to build a program organized around four key principles:

1. A program that costs no more than \$10K/year to attend but does not compromise on quality.
2. A program that can scale as needed and is financially sustainable, thus leveraging technology was central.
3. A program that supports students and keeps students at the center.
4. A program that leads to demonstrable employment outcomes.

What has emerged is a HP3 1.0. This program begins with the first two years of our undergraduate education and uses an adaptive learning platform. Learning has been flipped so that students do their work and reading at home and class time is used to facilitate the deepening of the learning experience and the development of collaboration and other important skills. The program is competency focused to prepare students to gain 21<sup>st</sup> century competitive skills. It provides life coaching for wrap around support for each student. Advanced predictive analytics are central to identify major risk junctures where proactive advising is necessary to prevent attrition, and it is scalable. Students are highly encouraged to find part time employment while attending school to deepen the applicability of the learning.

The program was launched through a great deal of networking with key partners who shared our enthusiasm for this model – the Chicago Public Schools, Noble Charter Network, Cristo Rey Network, One Goal, One Million

Degrees, the North Lawndale Schools, the Chicago Consortium for School Research, Higher Education Compact, the Learning Collaborative, among many others. I'm pleased to share that we launched this program this week with almost 100 students even though we didn't even announce it until late spring. I'd like to ask the following individuals who have worked diligently on this program to stand up and be recognized:

Stephanie Poczos (PAC)

Bonnie Flynn

Deborah O'Connor

Timothy Collins

Stuart Carrier

Rob Morrison

Shannon Meggert (PAC)

Diane Salmon (PAC)

Uzzie Cannon (PAC)

Stephen Thompson (PAC)

Willie Burnside (PAC)

Richard Schak (PAC)

Wytress Richardson (PAC)

Ignacio Lopez (PAC)

Sonja Strahl (PAC)

David SanFilippo (PAC)

Andi Koritari

Jennifer Robbin

John Olke (New Faculty)



Margeaux Temeltas (New Faculty)

Ann Ferkavitch (New Faculty)

Larry Miller (Advising Faculty)

And the many staff in enrollment, student finance, admissions, student services who have provided an unparalleled student experience.

As a result of this work and the work in teacher preparation, our institution has been invited to participate in numerous Gates Foundation roundtables and presentations. We were selected to participate in one of the incubator cohorts through Educause, a prestigious invitation for innovative institutions. In addition we were selected to participate in the DOE direct assessment program focusing on Prior Learning Assessment. And in fact it was the culmination of all this innovative work across the institution that resulted in NLU being described by one of our local foundations as “the darling of Chicago,” and by the Gates Foundation as both a “positive deviant” as well as an exemplar of the “modern urban university.”

Our university is being recognized on a number of national fronts. We have been ranked among the 50 best online masters programs in Early Childhood Education, and overall NLU has been ranked among the top “best values” among Midwestern universities.

Our progress has been exemplary and I hope you all can take a moment to applaud these institutional gains. They are truly a reflection of the collective effort of all our stakeholders.

### **Higher Education and our Current State**

While this has been a year in which we can take stock of our wins, It has also been a year where we have uncovered places we need to do better to

ensure that we are remaining relevant and serving our students better than anyone else.

We can take pride in improving term over term retention, but on an annual basis we lost approximately 1 out of 5 of our graduate students and 1 out of 4 of our undergraduates. We can be proud of 87% overall employment, but these numbers are not limited to employment within the profession nor are they limited to full-time employment. At an undergraduate level, our four year completion rate this year is hovering around 46%, and at 5 and 6 years it is 58% and 60% respectively. For an institution that has been focused on completion programs, these results demand improvement. Master degree completion has dropped to 46% completion in two years, 64% and 69% for 3 and four years respectively. Again, we have much room for improvement. And our 6 year doctoral completion rate is at 46%.

As we look out ahead externally we see that the landscape is shifting again. While the economy demonstrates signs of improvement, the long recession has resulted in people choosing to return to work and delaying educational and credentialing pursuits. Eduventures reports that for the third year in a row, student enrollment has declined nationally and the Midwest is one of the more heavily impacted regions. Our institution is feeling that same pressure this year and we are already experiencing enrollment and revenue decline.

That said, education remains our best bet for impacting our communities and our economy. We know that educated citizens are more successful citizens. We know there is a strong connection between higher education and better health, stronger voter turnout, lower crime, greater volunteerism, less reliance on public support, higher income. The majority of jobs that provide a middle class wage require some degree of post-secondary preparation.

Within our Chicago Public School (CPS) system there are approximately 400,000 students (86% are economically disadvantaged), a quarter of whom are in high school. But even in districts that are more affluent, the rate of economic disadvantage continues to increase as evidenced by a report from the Wheeling district high schools that noted that 34% of the student population is below the poverty level. The Chicago Consortium of School Research (CCSR) statistics tell us that only 14% of freshmen in CPS high school will make it through a four year

education. Moreover, for those who are ready and able to go to college there is an anticipated 5,000 seat shortfall due to cost accessibility. Couple this finding with the report from the Lumina Foundation that states that in order to meet workforce demands for our nation, we must achieve a degree completion rate of 60%. If we just look at the adult population in Illinois, we are only at 43% and approximately 45% of our almost 7 million adult state residents have no college degree. So clearly the need for education exists.

Add to this sea of change a long-anticipated demographic shift setting in. Each class going forward will be more racially, ethnically, and socio-economically diverse and include more first-generation students than the last. Moreover disruptive technology abounds and institutions that do not stay up with this learning curve will find themselves at a competitive disadvantage.

We not only have to find ways to expand access, but access must yield improved completion and employment. We have to invest in taking access to scale and access, completion, and employment **equal** success. This requires unprecedented innovation, determination, discipline, collaboration, and unwavering commitment to iterating our way to excellence. Eduventures reports that consumers are now closely examining the value proposition at institutions of higher education, and that in order to remain relevant and competitive new models of teaching and learning such as blended and flipped models will take the day.

Institutions that are prepared to offer a new value proposition and commit to demonstrating learning and employment outcomes are far better positioned to handle the road ahead.

## **The Road Ahead**

So what does our future look like for us? In other words, how do we stack up? In many respects NLU is uniquely positioned to address the most critical educational needs of our region and our nation. We are at the nexus of many of the national conversations about higher education with respect to the quality, cost, and the completion agenda; and we have the opportunity to lead the conversation about quality teacher preparation. In addition, our Chicago campuses reside in the third largest metropolitan city in our nation with over 9.5

M residents – a city that seeks to be a central zone of innovation and urban progress. And we have a wonderful destination campus in Florida to boot.

We are uniquely positioned to lead the way as a national model for the modern urban university -- a vibrant innovative community serving institution that is focused on creating social and economic opportunity through the transformation of lives and communities, an institution that is defined by effective and innovative learning experiences, and competitively prepared alumni; and an institution that is committed to access, innovation, and excellence. We just have to build on what we have begun, but we have to do it deliberately and with urgency.

Over the summer the presidents of Drexel University, Johnson C. Smith University (an HBCU), and myself came together in Chicago, at the request of Gates Foundation, and began to explore our common commitment to students and communities. At the end of this meeting we decided that we would each bring our leadership teams to each other's campuses and do a deep dive to understand the strengths that each of us brings to the new urban university. With that knowledge, we would publish a white paper that describes and defines the vibrant innovative 21<sup>st</sup> century higher education institution – the Modern Urban University - a model that could be replicated to address our increasingly urban population characterized by scalable programs, community engagement and transformation, student success, workforce readiness, access and affordability, new and innovative pedagogies focused on blended learning and other technology leveraged approaches. Together we became the founding members of the "New Urban University Coalition," or the "NUUC's" and we were referred to as the "NUUC-lear" approach to mission driven transformation and innovation.

To achieve this strategic vision we must demonstrate a commitment to great pedagogy and continue to leverage technology to build 21<sup>st</sup> century learning opportunities. To this end, the Provost's office will launch the Office of Teaching and Learning to support faculty as they develop best practices and experiment with innovation.

We must complete the launch of our HP3 program and scale this model in both flipped and online modalities to address the need for college access and completion. Innovative technology based approaches related to flipped learning and online learning, advanced predictive analytics, adaptive learning, life coaching and life skill development with demonstrable employment outcomes will

be central to closing the achievement gap. Next month our institution is hosting a conference sponsored by the Gates Foundation assembling national thought leaders on post-secondary success and examining issues related to the Common Core and other areas that improve the probability of student success.

We must move rapidly to solidify our undergraduate model so that we can take it to scale and serve a broad diverse population. Likewise, we must find ways to scale our field intensive quality teacher preparation approaches to serve communities in need of great teachers.

Our NCE and CPSA must insure that all their programs are professionally relevant and prepare competitive graduates and we must build programming that is blended and flexible so that we provide a value proposition for today's student seeking flexibility and connection. Programs that meet every other week or about once a month in combination with online learning will expand our reach and give us the best of digital and face to face learning – allowing for a deep interpersonal face to face engagement with the flexibility that digital learning provides. Together we must pursue student retention and success using every innovation and idea at our disposal to insure our students are the best prepared for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Our faculty have just completed a blended version of our MBA program and this year we will be adding several more blended programs to our portfolio.

We must deepen our focus on the development of a network of employer partnerships for internships and employment. Leveraging our alumni network, our faculty, and our deans in collaboration with our office of Career Development to support us in these efforts will be central. As an institution we are experimenting with combining advising, coaching, and career support to better meet student needs holistically, and we will continue to improve our model for students support and student success .

At our core, we are an institution interested in serving not only our students, but also our communities. We must clearly define our path to community engagement and pursue it passionately. A Modern Urban University must be able to demonstrate in a palpable way its impact on communities and their health and vitality.

We are creating a future together for NLU and the accomplishments over the past year exemplify the depth of our commitment and our resolve to achieve

a strategic vision that represents a vibrant Modern Urban university and that “future proofs” NLU. Without a doubt, we have much to celebrate. We are achieving great recognition across our community and nationally with foundations and key stakeholders – we are viewed as innovative, and bold enough to make “real change” happen. Our faculty, staff, students, alumni, and friends profoundly care about the University and are committed to its success. We have demonstrated our ability to deliver on our commitments and to implement necessary change.

The road ahead presents both challenge and opportunity. And I would like to leave you with a final thought. Winston Churchill once said that, “Success is not final. Failure is not fatal. It’s the courage to continue that counts.” These are powerful words because they remind us to remain humble when we are successful and that in order to make progress, we must risk failure. Are we going to fail – absolutely! We are going to fail and fail, and ultimately our success will be built on a mountain of failure. We will learn from every mistake and improve our programs, our systems, our processes, until we provide the best education to our students, advance this institution to new heights, to insure its relevance, and achieve its mission commitments.

I ask you today to make this the year where we all commit to moving rapidly, making mistakes, and iterating our way to excellence. We have placed our bet that this is our breakout year. Let us together bring to fruition the vision of the Modern Urban University - developing a model that is enviable across the nation – transforming education and propelling us to a position as thought leader and innovator in higher education.

Thank you for being here today and doing all that you do to support NLU and our students.