

10-9-2015

Remarks of President Hanycz

Colleen Hanycz PhD

La Salle University, president@lasalle.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.lasalle.edu/hanycz_inauguration

Recommended Citation

Hanycz, Colleen PhD, "Remarks of President Hanycz" (2015). *Inauguration of Colleen Hanycz*. 2.
http://digitalcommons.lasalle.edu/hanycz_inauguration/2

This Presentation is brought to you for free and open access by the University Events at La Salle University Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Inauguration of Colleen Hanycz by an authorized administrator of La Salle University Digital Commons. For more information, please contact careyc@lasalle.edu.

La Salle University Inauguration

09 October 2015

Remarks of President Hanycz

Honored guests,

Let me begin by expressing my gratitude to each of you gathered here today. Your efforts humble me, as does your devotion to La Salle. While today you do welcome a new President, more importantly you honor a fine school with a remarkable history.

Many thanks to my colleagues from other colleges and universities. And in a special way, let me welcome my Canadian friends, also university presidents, Drs. Terry Downey, David Sylvester and Pierre Zundel. You have travelled great distances to celebrate with La Salle today and I am grateful for your friendship.

Allow me to recognize the many Christian Brothers who have come before me in leadership of La Salle and those who continue to support this campus with their efforts. In particular, I offer my gratitude to Presidents Emeriti Brother Joseph Burke and Brother Michael McGinness who are here on the platform today and to Brother Daniel Burke who could not be with us. Also present today are La Salle's two former Interim Presidents, Mr. Nick Giordano and Dr. Jim Gallagher. La Salle owes a

debt to each of you for sharing your gifts and I pledge to continue your work and the legacy of St. John Baptist de la Salle.

I am indebted to La Salle's passionate alumni, and welcome those of you who are here today representing your years of graduation. Similarly, I welcome our Trustees, and former Trustees who have strategically stewarded this university. In particular, I want to acknowledge the tremendous leadership of our new Chair of the Board, Mr. Steve Zarrilli, class of 1983. Steve has given to me and to the Board generously of his time and energy since his July 1st appointment we are blessed to have him at the helm.

We are especially honored today to have so many of our neighbors joining us from the community. We had the opportunity to have a wonderful conversation with our neighbors earlier this week as part of our inauguration celebrations and I am so pleased to see that relationship continuing today.

To our students who have participated wholeheartedly in this week of Inauguration festivities, you are the best! I will never forget watching you line up in the cold drizzle outside this building early last Saturday morning to participate in our Lasallian Day of Service or gathering with you on the soccer field last Tuesday night in the hundreds to take our fantastic group picture. I wonder if you realize how inspiring you are

for those of us who witness your commitments? You are worth every effort that we make at La Salle. You are the future and you amaze me.

I must also acknowledge the fine staff, faculty and senior leadership colleagues who gather here today. We have had some tough work together over the past few months, but I remain inspired by your commitment to La Salle and to keeping our students at the heart of what we do. I remain so very optimistic about our shared future.

Thank you to the Inauguration Committee and its supporters who have worked on this week of celebration for months. It was perfect in every way. In particular, I would like to thank Julie Morrison for her unflagging optimism and dedication to these celebrations. You have done a wonderful job from start to finish.

And last but not least, I wish to thank my family – my husband Peter, our son Erik and our daughters Emily and Claire. We left our comfort zone in a small country north of here this summer to strike out on an amazing new chapter in our family journey. Without your curiosity and spirit of adventure, we would not be here. I would not be here. I am also so pleased that my Mom and brother were able to travel to join us today. Welcome to La Salle. I promise we will find t-shirts for both of you before the day is over!

As you know, university presidents do not work in isolation. And given that La Salle is a particularly... engaged community, I am thankful to the many colleagues who provided me with guidance and suggestions for today's remarks: I was firmly urged to be profound, historic, inclusive, humorous, inspirational, modest, literate, Canadian, American, proud, humble, committed and brief in my remarks. I may have blown this already...but that does not lessen the value of the advice so thank you!

I have served as the President-elect of La Salle University now for three intense months and I have come to believe that presidential years are like dog years – I am certain that I have been with you for at least seven times as long.

Throughout this period of three or 21 months, I have often reflected on what it is that distinguishes La Salle University from the long list of “others” around us. There is a helpful quote from the great American orator and Civil War veteran, Robert Ingersoll: **We can only rise by lifting others.**

And, in thinking more about La Salle, my mind turned to the recent historic visit of Pope Francis to our city and his call to each of us to strive for justice by celebrating

the dignity of the human person and the advancement of the common good.

This has been La Salle's focus for over 150 years. The Brothers of the Christian Schools knew, in 1863, as they know now that a chain is only as strong as its weakest link and for us to build authentic community, it can only be done by elevating everyone. Since the beginning, this elevation has been achieved through a mission focus on faith, community and service.

And it is those Lasallian ties – faith, community and service – that bind us together and that distinguish us from all others.

But in the years ahead, we must get even more serious about this. If we truly believe that, as a mission, faith, service and community can only be advanced in the broader context of seeking justice, of elevating all, then this must animate all that we do.

It must be an organizing principle for all of our programming and curriculum and it must be a part of everything that we impart to the young people entrusted to us. It must be obvious – evident in our classrooms, on our playing fields, in our dormitories and beyond our borders.

This commitment to justice through faith, service and community must drive our decision-making on all

fronts. Decisions around whom we partner with, where we invest our money, how we admit our students and what and how we educate them. Only then can we truly be said to rise, through the lifting of others.

I have heard countless alumni stories in my time here – stories of how one Christian Brother made a transformational difference in the life of a young man or...much later in our history...a young woman. Perhaps it was someone whose family had fallen on hard times and aid was offered, or someone who hadn't taken high school too seriously and now had no options for college and admission was offered. Somewhere along the line, a Brother stepped in...and elevated that young person...and changed the trajectory for an individual and in many cases, an entire family.

I graduated from a Lasallian high school and I can tell you I saw and noticed this focus– even as a dumb teenager – every single day. This mission was woven into daily life then as it is woven into the fabric of La Salle today.

But what of the challenges to that transformational role for La Salle? Throughout our history, we have continued to thrive despite any number of difficulties faced along the way. It is fair to say that we are currently living through one of those disruptive periods.

Nationally, recovery from the 2008 recession remains sluggish with financial pressures mounting for American families. At the same time, despite this economy, the cost of college has grown exponentially, so that families are forced to devote larger portions of their income to college education. Despite decades of advancing access to higher education, we are at risk of reversing that trend.

How are we able to continue to advance justice as access to the common good of education becomes more and more tenuous?

La Salle must recommit itself to the mission of providing access to higher education to those in our community who show promise and who might not otherwise have such access.

This commitment is one that may strain resources already frayed, but if a Lasallian education is no longer accessible, we will become another tool of injustice and our mission of faith, service and community will be nothing more than a hollow shell.

One of the complicating side-effects of our economic reality has been a devaluing of liberal education. Somehow, pursuing study in the Liberal Arts and Sciences has been labeled as 'education for the sake of education' a pastime only for the rich, the famous and the unfocused.

Instead, students are strongly encouraged by parents, advisors and even media to seek the most practical fields of study where the bright line connecting education to career is the most obvious. This is a logical shift, given the increasing sacrifice required by families to provide higher education. The return on investment has become a key factor.

I am not downplaying the value of professional study; I am a product of that model. As an academy, however, I believe we have failed to articulate the 'return on investment' of a liberal education and that failure in stressed times has a huge impact.

As I have often said, my best preparation for my practice as a securities attorney was my undergraduate degree in history. In law school, I learned the technical tools of the trade, but my history degree taught me to think critically, to express my ideas effectively, to problem solve both on my own and working in groups with my peers. I developed through that study fresh approaches to analysis and synthesis that provided me with a new filter for information – I learned to become skeptical of what I read, separating true from false, and worthy from unworthy information. It is this formation of good citizenship that we run the risk of losing at this moment in time.

We are living in a world that will continue to test the role of the university. As a community, we must redouble our efforts to ensure that our students, regardless of their disciplinary fields, receive a rich and powerful liberal education.

To do that, we must define the unique and specific characteristics of a La Salle graduate and then ensure that those outcomes are mapped to what goes on at La Salle from the first day to the last day of a student's time on our campus. Whether she is studying economics or he is studying nursing, each of our students must leave La Salle with specific competencies that will allow them to achieve personal and professional success and that, even more importantly, will ensure their cultivation as well-formed, contributing citizens.

And finally, how do we, La Salle University in 2015, remain united in community in a way that both celebrates the dignity of the human person and advances the common good?

Last Saturday, we celebrated a global Lasallian Day of Service by joining the work of our campus community with that of our alumni around the world to serve our neighbors and to advance the common good. We had close to 1000 students, alumni, Christian Brothers, faculty, staff, trustees and neighbors roll up their sleeves to work on service projects across our local

community and at various other destinations around the country, led by our alumni.

I can think of no better example of Lasallians coming together to ensure that we continue to be part of the solution to the challenges in our world. In some cases, our students tutored local neighborhood kids at a nearby community center. Other groups focused on painting walls or cleaning boiler rooms or serving a meal at a local homeless shelter. As Pope Francis would call us to do, through service to others, we advance the common good and the dignity of the individual.

But perhaps one of the best lessons from this experience came to me through one of our students who later reported that her experience on Saturday had 'not been satisfying'. She described the work that she was doing and noted that it was hard work and that it seemed to her that she was not making any 'real' difference at all.

I fear that we run the risk of converting even service experiences into opportunities to feel good about ourselves rather than opportunities to simply give, without recognition or even without the satisfaction of observing improvements. As was discussed at our "City as Classroom" symposium held this week, authentic service is hard. It is rarely fun, almost always gritty and often discouraging. It almost never mirrors its Hollywood depictions.

We must teach our students that the satisfaction from authentic service comes from knowing that it was given with a free heart, seeking nothing in return. And when nothing is returned, still we must feel satisfied – and our students must feel satisfied - knowing that we are taking small steps towards a just society.

As Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta once said, “I alone cannot change the world. But I can cast a stone across the water to create many ripples”. We must teach our students to throw stones, even if they will not see the final impact of the ripples they create.

What I have found in the past 21 dog months is a campus community that is fiercely proud and loyal, whose members often set aside their own interests in support of the greater mission and noble vocation of forming young people for lives of impact.

In the days ahead, despite whatever rough water we face, La Salle through its profound commitment to faith, service and community will continue to live out Pope Francis’s call to service, celebrating the dignity of the human being and advancing the common good.

Together, we will build the vision for this university. It will be a vision of faith, of hope, of commitment to the

future and with service to our students and community at its very heart, and it will belong to all of us. It is my hope that this vision will include granting meaningful access to a liberal education that is rooted in a thirst for justice. In this way, La Salle will truly change the world and approach justice.

22 years ago, Brother Joseph Burke, sitting behind me here today, was inaugurated. At his celebration, he drew on the thoughts and words of St. John Baptist de la Salle who, when faced with times of trouble, was often known to pray, "Lord, this work is yours". It is a prayer that we make to this day here in our Chapel, in response to our intercessions at Mass.

But St. John Baptist de la Salle took that one step further, looking to his assembly of teaching brothers as he said, "This work is *ours*". As Brother Joseph reminded us 22 years ago, and as I am sure Brother Michael confirmed during his 15 years as President of La Salle, "this work, this splendid university...is ours".

Today, I have answered your call to service with an enthusiastic 'yes'! Thank you for your confidence in my ability to lead this work and thank you for your continued prayers for La Salle.

God bless you and NEVER stop exploring.