

## **IMAGINING MARQUETTE'S STRATEGIC COMMITMENT TO ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE, 2010-13**

**John Pauly, Provost**

### *Prologue*

This proposal imagines a path to sustainable excellence in Marquette's academic programs, recognizing the journey that has brought us to this point, and trying to glimpse the road ahead. It briefly describes five challenges Marquette faces in the next three years in its quest for academic distinction, and the strategic commitments that will be required of us to respond to those challenges.

This is not a full-blown strategic plan for it does not yet incorporate the insights of a comprehensive, university-wide conversation across all academic, administrative, and support units. It does represent the best current thinking of the provost's office and the college deans, and the direction that the provost's office strongly advocates. The proposal builds upon several different forms of evidence and experience, including the provost's Fall 2008 tour of the colleges and subsequent *Marquette Magazine* article; staff research on specific problems, such as enrollment management, student success, e-learning, and transformational pedagogies; the reports of the First-Year Experience committees (which included many faculty); Fr. John Fitzgibbons' year-long conversations with faculty on issues of professional development; ideas in the individual college strategic plans and annual reports; a provost's office retreat held last January; and the ideas and aspirations discussed at the provost/deans' retreat held August 17-18, 2010.

In order to connect these ideas to the ongoing work of the university's administrative and support units, this proposal accepts as given three assumptions widely held throughout the university. First, it situates its goals within the brand identity Marquette has already established, and it aims to deepen the resonance of current themes such as "be the difference," "becoming men and women for others," and "excellence, faith, leadership, and service." Second, it recognizes the importance of articulating the significant value that a Marquette education adds, both as a way to strengthen our position in the marketplace of higher education and to guide internal allocations of resources. Third, it recognizes the importance of creating a robust and sustainable business model for our academic programs that includes new revenue opportunities.

### *Vision*

The provost and deans believe that Marquette would make itself a more compelling, intellectually robust, and financially healthy university if it self-consciously embraced the spirit of adventure, exploration, and discovery that characterized the life of its namesake, Father Jacques Marquette. Over the last three years of his life, Pere Marquette travelled tirelessly up and down the Mississippi River and its tributaries, in a quest that was at once spiritual, scientific, and cultural.

Marquette University, in its talk about itself, often stresses its traditions, the sense of continuity that joins its past to its present. But every so often our history yields a different sort of story—one that illustrates our capacity for imagination, innovation, and courage. Last year the Centennial of Women

Marquette commitments, 2

made this point most emphatically, but there are other equally provocative examples. We have been a pioneer in creating and sustaining Equal Opportunity Programs. In 2003 our own undergraduates imagined the first model for the student global medical brigades that are now a worldwide phenomenon. Our GasDay Laboratory forecasts energy needs for 17 utilities across the country. For almost three decades, we have sponsored one of the country's most successful summer journalism workshops for minority students. In the last two years, our faculty have founded two start-up companies, Promentis and AviMed, whose purpose is to develop drugs for the treatment of schizophrenia. And we are about to embark upon an interdisciplinary experiment in social entrepreneurship a step ahead of every other Jesuit university in the United States.

We want to claim this vision of exploration and discovery as our guiding star and source of inspiration. We propose to add to the phrase "We are Marquette" another layer of meaning, declaring our commitment to engage the world as we find it, seek practical applications of our knowledge, do research in the service of human good, encourage spiritual as well as intellectual exploration, and strive for inclusive excellence and diversity. This proposal adds substance and specificity to the commitment to "be the difference," by calling for programs and experiences that will make a Marquette education vivid, real, and distinctive. We are Pere Marquette.

Our central focus remains, as it has always been, the well-being and intellectual and moral development of our students and faculty. That spiritual commitment drives everything else. We understand the challenges noted below as university-wide, rather than as particular to any one college. As such, these challenges will require a coordinated institutional response, even as each college finds ways to shape, focus, and localize its own commitments.

### *Commitments*

Below is a quick overview of the five key challenges we foresee, and the strategic commitments we propose in order to address those challenges. The commitments we advocate will enhance Marquette's intellectual reputation, make its programs distinctive in the marketplace, and strengthen our finances. They will drive our planning and budgeting processes, and help us decide how best to invest our resources and attention over the next few years. Declaring these ideas as commitments also means that they are promises we intend to keep.

*Challenge 1—Changes in student demographics, financial and psychosocial needs, and learning styles.*

**Commitment—To build an infrastructure that guarantees a transformational learning experience for all students who enter Marquette, and prepares them for careers of professional and ethical excellence.** This commitment will entail coordinating and strengthening academic support, advising, counseling, disability services, service learning, and social entrepreneurship; implementing the MAPworks early alert system; enhancing the first-year experience; extending lessons learned from our own successes with EOP and FFP; developing longer-term enrollment targets for all undergraduate and graduate programs; and working with student affairs to foster a diverse and inclusive climate.

Marquette commitments, 3

*Challenge 2—Changes in faculty demographics and needs.*

**Commitment—To create an integrated, mindful recruiting and professional development program that identifies the resources necessary to compete for talented, mission-driven faculty and meaningfully support them at each stage of their careers.** This commitment entails recruiting high-caliber faculty who share Marquette’s passion for Jesuit, Catholic education; anticipating the challenges as well as the opportunities posed by the impending wave of faculty retirements (on one hand, the need to hire and mentor many young faculty; on the other, an unusual chance to reshape Marquette’s academic programs for years to come); seeking diversity in cultural and intellectual experiences when recruiting new faculty; helping faculty sustain their research as an intrinsic part of their teaching and service; encouraging work-life balance in faculty’s professional and personal lives; and preparing faculty to assume leadership and mentoring roles as their careers mature.

*Challenge 3—Transformation of the modes of learning, work, and scholarship by digital technology.*

**Commitment—To incorporate contemporary digital technologies and modes of e-learning into the everyday teaching, research, and service of faculty and students, in ways that will stamp a Marquette education as contemporary, global-minded, and transformational.** This commitment entails defining the scope and purpose of Marquette’s investment in e-learning; supporting faculty who wish to experiment with digital technologies in their teaching and research; incorporating well-established technologies such as iPads, social media, and GPS units into everyday instruction; using technology to encourage intercultural dialogue and cross-national workgroup experiences; and using online and hybrid coursework to make Marquette programs available to new audiences.

*Challenge 4—Expansion of a research-driven international knowledge economy.*

**Commitment—To encourage graduate programs in select areas and enthusiastically support faculty and student research as a routine activity, in order to enhance Marquette faculty and students’ opportunities to become thought leaders in their professions.** This commitment entails defining the meaning, nature, and scope of Marquette’s participation in doctoral education; robustly supporting faculty research and scholarship as a means of enhancing Marquette’s national and international academic reputation so that we might attract and retain talented faculty and students; seeking out scholars who want to work in a campus culture of exploration, discovery, and innovation; preparing graduate students for eventual leadership in their professions; extending undergraduate research opportunities to a wider range of students in all the undergraduate colleges, including programs such as the McNair Scholars that target students from disadvantaged backgrounds who are seeking entry into doctoral studies; and promoting interdisciplinary approaches to studying the most difficult social, political, ethical, and technological problems.

Marquette commitments, 4

*Challenge 5—Intense public scrutiny of universities for cost, performance, and student outcomes.*

**Commitment—To articulate the special value of a Marquette education for prospective students as the promise of a transformational educational experience in the Jesuit tradition.** This commitment entails making fuller use of high-impact learning techniques well-documented in the scholarship of teaching; nurturing a culture of assessment as a mode of self-criticism and continuous quality improvement; supporting engaged learning, organizational intelligence, and ethics and social responsibility as key features of a Marquette education; demonstrating the family resemblances between all the forms of practical learning at Marquette (e.g., discovery learning in engineering, applied learning in business, translational science in nursing) as both a marketing strategy and as a guide to strategic investment; strengthening connections to alumni as the first professional network for new Marquette graduates; offering programs for faculty and students that explore Ignatian pedagogy and Catholic artistic, cultural, and intellectual life; and collaborating with student affairs to promote co-curricular leadership and learning experiences.

### *Summary*

The commitments above involve a great deal of routine, everyday work: monitoring student success, designing professional development programs for faculty, incorporating digital technologies into our everyday teaching and scholarship, and encouraging research as an activity intrinsically connected to teaching, learning, and service. By such small and steady acts, we will continue to make Marquette a special place as well as a financially secure institution. If we do these things with a high level of effectiveness, we will also earn a reputation as a university that keeps its promises to students. Within the marketplace of higher education, that is a reputation with great value.

But of course we aspire to more. We aim not merely for effectiveness but true distinction: to establish ourselves as a university that considers education as intellectual and moral formation; seeks no less than leadership roles in the community, nation, and world for our students, faculty, and alumni; emphasizes practical learning in the service of the world's problems; claims inclusiveness and diversity as essential to intellectual and ethical excellence; attends to student well-being with special care; celebrates the forms of Jesuit and Catholic artistic, cultural, and intellectual imagination; provides faculty with what they need to do their very best work; and supports research as an opportunity for discovery and innovation.

Above all, we want to explore the world in the spirit of Pere Marquette, so that when a biomedical engineer devises a prosthetic device that eases the burdens of everyday life, or a historian's research opens up a new field of study, or a dentist or nurse devotes herself to improving the public health of a neighborhood, or a journalist wins a Pulitzer for international business reporting, or a school superintendent enriches the society's discourse about public education (all things our students, faculty, and alumni have done), others will say: that's Marquette!