

Time and Depth for and with Loyola University Maryland:

Creating a Framework for Ongoing Discussions

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As I shared with you in October [<http://www.loyola.edu/department/academicaffairs/about/remarks>], I have been thinking about big questions related to faculty time, depth of inquiry—both your own and our students—and the intellectual ideals of a liberal arts-oriented university. Balancing your teaching, scholarship, and engagement with the community is so important. It is good for you; it is good for our students; it is good for Loyola; and it is good for our community. And I don't need to convince you: such balance is also difficult. In this brief document, I return to a few questions that I hope you, the Loyola faculty, take time to discuss among yourselves and together as colleagues before we break for the summer. I have proposed to Carolyn Barry, Chair of the Faculty, that she consider inviting you to start a discussion about these questions at the Faculty Assembly on April 17, 2015. That way, we can take up foundational questions of faculty life at Loyola when there are no specific proposals on the table. That is, I think it is important to have these conversations in advance of such directed initiatives as strategic planning or Core review because their intense focus might get in the way of creating our sense of shared purpose as a single faculty. Going forward, I hope to have multiple opportunities for you to exchange ideas in the coming weeks and months.

In my short time at Loyola, I have observed that we have wonderful faculty-student (graduate and undergrad) engagement going on in our departments, in the Core, in Messina, in Honors, in mentoring graduate student theses and internships. We have a core curriculum that is broad and asks students to consider studies across a wide range of disciplines, fields, and ways of knowing. We ask that undergraduate students take five courses per semester for their four semesters ensuring that they have a deep and broad Liberal Arts education in the Jesuit tradition. Likewise, we have high expectations for breadth and depth in our graduate programs, majors, and even minors. All this is consistent with what makes us distinctive as a liberal arts-oriented university and how we prepare our graduate and undergraduate students for long-term success in their lives and careers. Indeed, this is precisely what employers' want, as Carol Geary Schneider, President of the Association for American Colleges and Universities, argues so compellingly in her recent reflection *How to explode a myth: Reshaping the conversation about the Liberal Arts*. [<http://www.acenet.edu/the-presidency/columns-and-features/Pages/How-to-Explode-a-Myth-Reshaping-the-Conversation-About-the-Liberal-Arts.aspx>]

Yet, at the same time, I am wondering if we are giving our students enough time to be creative and imaginative, to spend hours in the lab, to write or to analyze data, to return on their own to a community organization with which they partnered in a service-learning course, to hang out in the archives of a hospital as I did as an undergrad, to discern what courses to take on their own. In short, to go deeper into what might be their passion.

Simultaneously, I wonder if faculty at Loyola have enough time and opportunities for depth to write, to collect data, to interview research participants, to read manuscripts, to share their scholarship, to assist

in the community, to begin a new area of study, to collaborate with graduate and undergraduate students, to create new courses, to try a different pedagogical approach, to teach in areas that they have newly discovered are of interest, to team-teach, to develop new and emerging graduate areas of study, to collaborate across disciplines and schools, and to have conversations among colleagues about new readings and new ideas in their fields. In short, to pursue the passions that brought them into academia in the first place.

So, broadly speaking, I inquire: How are our structures or historic commitments working to enhance what we do at Loyola? And how are they, perhaps, getting in the way of time and depth? In this context here are three questions I pose to you, the faculty community:

1. What faculty work and workload are best for time and depth of reflection?

How do we best use faculty time—our most precious resource—in ways that matter to us, our students, and our profession? Many of you on the tenure-track have recommended Robert Boice's influential *Advice for New Faculty Members* (2000), which advocates moderation in all areas of faculty life so as to achieve a sustainable academic career. More broadly, Boice's work reminds us of the role of institutions and tenured faculty in creating structures and models that make such balance not only possible but also consistent with our intellectual ideals.

Across academia and in other settings, it is not uncommon to feel pressed for time (including lack of sleep), concerned about work-life balance amid a feeling of ever-creeping tasks, hopeful for more time to think, to play, to write, to be creative, or to give to the larger community. In a world of competing demands on our time, how or what can be changed in your academic schedule to make room for what we value in a Jesuit, Catholic liberal education founded in Ignatian principles or values of discernment, imagination, scholarship that leads to improving the world, and, of course, intellectual excellence? In other words, how should or can we create time and depth for engaging and reflecting on deep questions, for focused attention, for creativity, and for bringing our knowledge and interventions to the world and the community? For me, such questions inevitably bring up concrete matters of faculty workload, administrative responsibilities, and shared governance. More important, especially within the Ignatian tradition, are larger questions about what we value as members of both our disciplinary fields and our shared profession.

2. What student work and course load are best for time and depth of reflection?

In Robert Newton's article, *Reflections on the Educational Principles of the Spiritual Exercises* (1994), he argues that St. Ignatius' Spiritual Exercises and Ignatian pedagogy offer us a possible way of thinking about the education that places emphasis on how to learn or the development of skills required for lifelong and self-initiated learning, whether it be as an undergraduate or later as a graduate student, here or elsewhere. Likewise, in *A New Ratio for a New Millennium* (2000), Vincent J. Duminuco reminds us that the central element in the Jesuit education paradigm "moves learning beyond the realm of an objective grasp of facts, principles, and skills to the level of personal meaning."

With this framework, how and should we find ways to give graduate and undergraduate students the opportunity and the time and space for discernment, for making choices, and the agency to develop their passions? Might such time and space yield greater room for faculty-student research

experiences, for graduate-undergraduate partnerships, for increased reflection on study abroad experiences, for interdisciplinary approaches, for practice or development of rhetorical, writing, and quantitative literacy, for community engaged scholarship, learning, and internships, and so on? For me, such questions point to concrete matters about what this might require: Changes to the academic calendar? Changes to the number or the sequence of requirements? Changes to student course load? Changes to the type of graduate/undergraduate requirements? Changes to the relationship or ratio between majors and broad liberal arts training? Capstone requirements, opportunities, or experiences? Changes to the kinds or volume of campus programming that we offer?

3. Finally, how do we best cultivate time and depth of reflection in our curriculum and student experiences?

Martha Nussbaum, a legal scholar who takes a transdisciplinary approach, has recently focused on the liberal arts in the 21st century, especially in *Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities* (2010). I share some of her questions as she argues that education in the liberal arts, particularly the humanities, is in an uncertain state, and as a result, so is democracy today. I look forward to some directed thinking about how a liberal arts-oriented university like Loyola can best cultivate the scholar-teacher and citizen-student models that make us distinctive as an institution of higher education.

That is, how can we imagine new ways of embracing the teacher-scholar/scholar-teacher model so that both you the faculty and your students have the time and agency for your research and scholarship, as well as to engage and collaborate with students and the community? This points less to concrete matters of workload and curriculum and more to new possibilities to draw on the strengths and passions of members of our community. How might we engage students in research, scholarship, and community projects across, between, and within all disciplines? How can we encourage more student-faculty collaboration? Are there meaningful ways to bring together graduate and undergraduate students, whether working on a project, mentoring each other, or in some other way participating in a shared intellectual endeavor? And what factors hinder such possibilities?

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These are large and challenging questions. And I acknowledge that they have ramifications for your individual lives as a faculty member, our shared identity as a single faculty, and how Loyola as an academic institution arranges itself. Please know that I do not have set answers to these questions, though of course I do have some initial reflections and observations. More important is the conversation among us. What I am after is a willingness to remind ourselves of what is important and a shared effort to imagine how best to cultivate it. This is what we do as faculty: ask big questions of ourselves and our worlds, and then engage each other in exchange and inquiry. I think we will be the better for it, both as a faculty with shared understandings and an institution with a shared mission, prepared to deliberate among ourselves whenever concrete ideas come our way.