

President's Fall Convocation Address

**OneLeMoyne:
Our Collective Journey**

Fred P. Pestello, Ph.D.

September 9, 2011

We are OneLeMoyne! This fall we begin our fourth year together centered on the question most relevant to our future direction and collective fate: “What must we become?” Through participation in a highly inclusive process we addressed many tough organizational challenges. We reflected upon what we *have been*, as we considered what we *must be*. We reaffirmed our core values and committed ourselves to transformative change. Thanks to your embrace of the OneLeMoyne process, together we uncovered a host of meaningful answers. These answers led to our OneLeMoyne Vision and, directly derived from that vision, our course of action—the [OneLeMoyne Strategic Plan](#).

The most important question we face this evening is, “What is next?” Now that we have carefully discerned what we are called to do, our collective investment and current momentum will serve to propel us towards the exciting future we envision. How do I know this? The evidence is clear from even a brief review of highlights of the past year.

A Year to Remember

No place and time better captured what makes Le Moyne special than the Double A parking lot on the morning of Sunday, May 22, 2011. At that otherwise ordinary site, we held the College’s 61st Commencement Exercises. The entire campus community came together to stage a ceremony that celebrated academic excellence, demonstrated the Jesuit way of proceeding, expressed Catholic values and promoted human hope. It was an awe-inspiring gathering. With a style and flair distinctly Le Moyne’s, we launched into the world a new cohort of men and women for and with others. On that morning, the most brilliant reflection was not from the much prayed for and anxiously welcomed sun, but rather from the positive spirit and quality of results that increasingly typify our campus. For weeks afterwards I received cards, e-mails and phone calls from graduates, their families and guests expressing gratitude and providing glowing reviews of the moving ceremony.

Our commencement capped a year of extraordinary accomplishments. One can look in any direction here at the College and see substantial improvement. This is perhaps most obvious in our facilities. Last year, we opened the new Le Moyne Plaza, dedicated an Athletic Turf Field, established a house for our student veterans and resurrected the Dolphin Den. During the course of the year we erected the addition to the science building which will open in January. Over the summer we renovated classrooms on the fourth floor of Grewen Hall, finalized plans for a campus pub, began to build new student meeting and club spaces, updated several of the most heavily used lavatories and completed the first phase of the much needed HVAC upgrade in Grewen Hall. All told, we have done more construction in this past year than any since the College’s founding and it is all being driven by what we heard during the many OneLeMoyne conversations.

As beautiful as the new facilities and renovated spaces may be, however, at Le Moyne facilities are first and foremost the context for fostering excellence. It is what takes place within our facilities that is most important. On that score, the past year’s accomplishments are even more significant.

First among those achievements is the new Core Curriculum. The common undergraduate curriculum is the primary means through which a college places its unique educational stamp on its students. The Core is particularly important at faith-based colleges which hold to a set of deep convictions and view knowledge as instrumental for both understanding and improving the human condition. The fact that the Le Moyne faculty was able to design and overwhelmingly pass a new Core in only 24 months is remarkable. Thanks to your efforts, our future students will be better prepared for the complex and interdependent world they will enter. As a sign of our commitment to the Core, the President's Cabinet supported a permanent annual increase of \$50,000 to the Provost's budget. This money is designated for faculty development in preparation for implementing the new Core Curriculum.

The curriculum is, of course, delivered by the faculty. Here at Le Moyne the faculty is known for its dedication to both outstanding teaching as well as advancing knowledge, particularly in collaboration with our students. Provost LeMura has repeatedly shared with me how proud she is of the impressive teacher-scholars we have hired in recent years—they complement well the already high standards set by the long-serving faculty.

While the new Core was being created, the Student Development Division was working with Academic Affairs to align the two divisions more closely. The transition of the academic advising, academic support, career planning and service learning offices to Student Development has allowed for enhanced collaboration across all student services. As a result, we have been able to better track retention and, through the Students of Concern Committee, provide immediate response to students in need. Reorganization of the Student Development Division itself has also allowed for greater integration of the student experience, resulting in holistic services that promote co-curricular learning on our residential campus.

Thanks to the Enrollment Management Division's hard work we recently welcomed the third consecutive record class of new full-time undergraduates. This enrollment success was accompanied by both an increase in geographic diversity and an improvement in the overall student profile. The award-winning marketing effort coordinated by our Office of Communications and the Integrated Marketing Committee is allowing us to better spread the word about the quality and value of a Le Moyne education.

It is not students alone who are responding to us so positively. When the Institutional Advancement Division launched a Scholarship Initiative last fall, they set a goal of \$2 million for scholarship assistance. I am pleased to report that they surpassed it. Equally impressive are the most recent data on philanthropy which show that, among all Catholic colleges and universities in the United States, Le Moyne College ranks eleventh in alumni participation and, among Jesuit colleges, we are number four of the twenty-eight.

I firmly believe that a strong attraction to the Jesuit nature of a Le Moyne education is at the center of this response by potential students and generous donors. To strengthen the foundation of our mission, last spring I appointed Father David McCallum, S.J. to a new role as Director of Mission and Identity. He is now responsible for leading efforts to ensure that Le Moyne's Jesuit, Catholic identity and mission are both vibrant and sustainable.

The year was also a busy one in Finance and Administration where there was a flurry of activity around our bond issue and maintaining our financial ratios in these challenging times. Nowhere is this area's level of functioning better described than in the recent review of the College's finances issued in the preliminary report of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education. The authors state:

The College's overall financial condition has improved since the CHE (Commission on Higher Education) team visit in 2006.... The receipt of a \$50 million bequest certainly contributed to Le Moyne's ability to maintain a position of financial strength, but in addition, it is clear that there was also expert financial management.

These results come from a team effort. We are working throughout the College to manage our resources well. Information Technology Services contributed to our financial success last year by leading us through a smooth conversion to a new and externally hosted e-mail system (Gmail)—saving the College approximately \$100,000 a year while producing greater efficiencies. Human Resources helped with fiscal stewardship efforts through its outstanding management of our health plans, which, in addition to saving the College money, resulted in an average premium increase of only one percent for the last four years.

The past year was also another successful one for Le Moyne Athletics. The staff seamlessly transitioned women's lacrosse and baseball to Division II and the NE-10 conference. We recruited the College's first recreation, fitness and wellness coordinator, which has led to substantial increases in group fitness, community participation in recreation and wellness, and collaboration across campus on wellness initiatives. And, serving as a model for us all, the coaching staff began a multi-session program designed to deepen their commitment to the Jesuit ideals of our College.

What's Next?

From what I have outlined today—and in many ways I have only scratched the surface—it is apparent that our College is moving swiftly forward to meet the demands of the times and the aspirations of our vision. A lot is changing and our momentum continues to accelerate. The question now before us is, "What is next?" In other words, "Where do we go from here?" Fortunately, we have the answers to these questions. Our future direction is set by the [OneLeMoyne Strategic Plan](#).

As we contemplate our future, I ask that you keep in mind that the OneLeMoyne Vision is our collective vision, written by the OneLeMoyne Committee (formed through a campus-wide nomination process) and based upon the many OneLeMoyne conversations in which all of you participated. Similarly, the OneLeMoyne Strategic Plan was derived directly from our vision and created by approximately 90 members of the campus community who joined together in the six strategic priority teams. The roadmap for our path forward, the OneLeMoyne Strategic Plan, is not my strategic plan, it is not the administration's strategic plan—it is *our* strategic plan. The plan was created by dozens of you seated here this evening based on numerous conversations, invited commentary and a campus-wide survey.

The OneLeMoyne Vision is an elegant one that commits us “to be a premier Jesuit college where diverse talents meet to foster academic excellence, integrity and a commitment to justice.” In it we pledge to “develop the full capacity of each student’s mind and heart” by cultivating in our students a “keen compassionate intelligence.” This is to be achieved through our upholding of “centuries-old ideals of liberal arts education by maintaining the highest standards of excellence, cultivating reason, critical acumen and eloquence.” I am immensely proud of the vision we created. It is inspiring.

The OneLeMoyne Strategic Plan is our path to achieving the OneLeMoyne Vision. The College’s future now hinges on implementing the plan, which is organized around the six strategic priorities that emerged from the OneLeMoyne Vision. They are:

1. Fully and energetically express the College’s Catholic and Jesuit mission, identity and character;
2. Vigorously pursue academic excellence across all programs;
3. Create organizational excellence in resource stewardship and professional practices throughout the College;
4. Maintain an intellectually, socially and spiritually vibrant College community;
5. Promote greater diversity within the Le Moyne community and increased engagement between the College and other communities regionally, nationally and internationally;
6. Achieve a national reputation for excellence in Jesuit education.

We have begun to realize many aspects of the plan. For example, we changed the position of Special Assistant to the President to Director of Mission and Identity; passed a new Core Curriculum that has first-year seminars, senior capstone courses and other forms of interdisciplinary learning; and established an Office for Campus Life and Leadership as part of the reorganization within Student Development.

This coming year we will be working to realize other parts of the plan, including establishing the McDevitt Center for Creativity and Innovation, founding a School of Business and completing the remaining Round I facilities projects. The President’s Cabinet is in the midst of creating measures and scorecards to track our performance on each of the six strategic priorities as a means of ensuring our success in meeting our vision. You will be hearing more about these efforts in the coming months.

Tonight I ask each of you to reflect upon how you can best contribute to the realization of OneLeMoyne. I am also asking that, within the next month, each vice president host a division-wide meeting of the departments for which he or she is responsible. In this meeting the vice president will review the strategic plan and discuss how the division will align behind it. If, after attending this meeting, any of you are unclear about how your work can best advance the plan, you should talk with your department chair or supervisor. If you are still uncertain after this conversation you should make an appointment to meet with the

dean, provost, or vice president of your division. It is essential that every one of us understands how to do our part to advance the College's mission and vision. Doing so will ensure that we achieve even more impressive results.

Conclusion

One of the most inspiring moments I have had over the past few years occurred in April 2010 when Father Adolfo Nicolás, S.J., Superior General of the Society of Jesus, addressed leaders of Jesuit colleges from across the world. In his talk, titled "[Depth, Universality and Learned Ministry: Challenges to Jesuit Higher Education Today.](#)" Father General encouraged us not to follow the norm in education by producing graduates who are professionally competent but superficial. As reflected in our OneLeMoyne Vision, he urged us as Ignatian educators to form young men and women of depth who are engaged with the less fortunate—those in need of help and healing.

Thanks to your investment of time and talent, we are graduating exceptional young men and women who would make Father General proud. I will conclude by sharing two fine examples of the character of our students and the difference they make in the lives of others. The first is a story I told last year on Founders' Day.

The Le Moyne swim team works with disabled youth. One of the members of that team is Maureen McDonough. Maureen is also a member of the biological honors society, minors in both chemistry and psychology in addition to her biology major and has consistently made the Dean's List. I will now read you a letter that was sent last fall to our swimming coach, Dr. Joe Hannah.

November 10, 2010

Dr. Hannah,

I am writing to you to let you know what a wonderful service that the Le Moyne swim team is providing for the Advocates group every Sunday afternoon in your facility. My 16 year old son Dylan attends these sessions. All of the students have been engaging and friendly, however, I am writing to point out one student in particular.

This past Sunday Maureen McDonough spent nearly the entire hour swimming with Dylan in the deep end of the pool. She could have decided to make Dylan go back in the shallow section with the rest of the group. She didn't. What she did do was ask me if Dylan could go with her into the deep section and asked very thoughtful questions about Dylan and why he was holding his hands over his ears. After my brief description of how he doesn't like noise, crowds or being told no, she followed his lead and let him do his thing. Dylan doesn't speak and life is sometimes challenging for my wife and I, so you can imagine what Maureen must have felt like as she ventured into uncharted waters (literally!) with Dylan. He even became a little agitated near the diving board so Maureen spoke to him reassuringly and in such a way that he calmed down.

In a world where we are all busy finding our own way, the event I witnessed last Sunday was truly rare. The swim team, the college and her parents need to know what a remarkable person Maureen is. If the impact we have on others less fortunate than ourselves is a measurement of our success in life, then Maureen has already accomplished more in her life than most people ever will.

Thanks again for the use of your facility.

Esteban and Lisa Gonzalez

The second story is of another Le Moyne student, Andrew Lunetta, who has been receiving significant publicity for his humanitarian work. Andrew is a peace and global studies major and, like Maureen, has repeatedly made the Dean's List. He created the Le Moyne College Sandwich Makers (LMCSM) in 2008. Comprised of fellow students, LMCSM ministers to the homeless in the Syracuse region and has provided over 10,000 lunches to the Samaritan Center (a soup kitchen) and the Oxford Street Inn (a men's homeless shelter).

In addition to founding LMCSM and participating in numerous service trips to impoverished areas around the globe, this past March Andrew started an organization called Pedal to Possibilities. Working through the Samaritan Center, Pedal to Possibilities hosts morning group rides of six to nine miles. Following these morning rides, the group gets together to play games, listen to music or chat. After joining in these rides ten times, the participants can keep their bike. In total, the riders have covered over 5,000 miles.

It is through efforts like those of Maureen and Andrew that smart Dolphin students and alumni are fulfilling our Jesuit mission to make the world a more just place.

As we envision the work ahead, we should move forward with great pride in all that we have already accomplished, in the fine young men and women we are forming and in the top rankings and recognition for excellence that we have received. What we do at Le Moyne is impressive. This evening we must ask, "Where do we go from here?" The [OneLeMoyne Strategic Plan](#), our collectively generated path forward, provides the answers upon which we, individually and collectively, must now act. This path requires the sustained energy, conviction and courage which I see every day at our College.

Thank you for generating and embracing the change that is so pervasive across our campus, while remaining steadfastly committed to our core ideals.

The best is yet to come!

May God bless you.