To: Members of the Strategic Planning Team (SPT)  
From: Kevin Wildes, S.J.  
Date: 3 April 2013  
Re: Planning

As you know, in the academic year 2008-09 the University developed our current strategic plan Loyola 2012. That plan, grounded in our mission, has both an integrated facilities plan and a financial plan. Loyola 2012 is also the basis for our fundraising. The development of Loyola 2012 was a University-wide effort which included faculty, staff, students, and the Board of Trustees. The plan was envisioned as a five year plan and we are now in the fourth year of implementing it. We will continue the implementation of Loyola 2012 and do an evaluation of the plan after the fifth year.

With the completion of Loyola 2012 on the horizon, it is time for us to begin the process of creating our next strategic plan. As we begin this process, we know that the world of higher education is facing significant changes, and I would ask the members of the SPT to begin reflecting on the changing environment and the challenges they pose for Loyola. I do not want Loyola to be simply reactive to the changing environment around us. Rather, I want us to be mindful of our environment as we plan so we can move forward deliberately.

I think there are at least four related trends that are prompting important questions about higher education.

- One trend involves the impact and ongoing development of internet technology and online learning on higher education. We need to examine carefully these developing tools and how we might use them for our mission. I think it is important to remember that “method” is not devoid of content.¹ If education is more than simply conveying information then the way we educate conveys content. One of the key elements of Jesuit education has been attention to method. (Indeed, the creation of “Jesuit” education came

¹ Even though Descartes and much of the modern age have assumed that one could separate method and content, most contemporary philosophers of method would argue this assumption to be incorrect and that every methodology contains some elements of content (See, Rene Descartes, Discourse On Method).
from the method/course of studies that Ignatius and the first Jesuits experienced at the University of Paris and then adapted.) Jesuits are also known for being very practical and adaptive. I note these points as adaptation of the method does impact the content, and we need to be aware of this. So we will need to be clear about the purpose of our educational programs and a Loyola education so that we can use these developing technologies to support our mission in education.

- A second trend is the growing concern about the cost of higher education tuition and accessibility along with concerns about demonstrable outcomes and the value of what is done in higher education. These questions about cost and value are not only on the minds of parents but they are also part of the political debates and discussions. The Federal investment in higher education, which is crucial for students and universities, usually leads to greater regulation and oversight.

- With the questions about funding and regulation there is a related and growing movement for demonstrable evidence about “outcomes” in higher education. We know this directly from our accrediting organizations such as the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. So our planning will need to consciously build in ways to measure outcomes of what we do.\(^2\)

- It is important to remember that there has been an evolution of what I refer to as the higher education market place. We have seen a significant multiplication of “universities” in recent years. Historically, American society made distinctions between vocational training/education and university education. We no longer make those distinctions today so Loyola will need to be clear about who we are and what we do in the crowded world of “universities.”

These trends raise fundamental questions about how our society views what constitutes an educated person and the role of traditional institutions of higher education in educating those people. While these trends are important social questions they also raise important questions about how we can adapt a Loyola education to be sure that it is accessible to people.

In light of these trends, our reality and our aspirations, I would like the SPT to begin the work, now, of developing the first steps for our next strategic plan. As with Loyola 2012, the development of the next plan will engage the whole University community: faculty, staff, students, and the Board of Trustees.

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\(^2\) There are serious philosophical questions about what can be measured (primary and secondary qualities). So we will need to be rigorous and creative in developing our ‘measures.’
Given the pressing national questions, Loyola’s next strategic plan ought to not simply be a new addition of what we have done in the past. I think we will need to emphasize some key elements in our planning.

- First, the planning will need to be “mission-centric.” In the current marketplace of universities, we should be clearly grounded in the Jesuit tradition of education (e.g., our tradition in the liberal arts and sciences, our commitment to educating the whole person, our view that education is not just for the individual student but benefits the whole community). [See the attached document on the “Some Characteristics of Jesuit Colleges and Universities: A Self-Evaluation Instrument”]

- Second, given the emphasis on our mission and identity, we will need to be clear about how our identity shapes the kind of education Loyola offers (e.g., educating the whole person which integrates Academic and Student Affairs, education that forms students who contribute to the community). Rooting our education in our mission and identity will also guide us in our use of technology. Robert Newton notes the importance of advising in Jesuit education. He makes a subtle but important observation that Ignatius viewed the role of the advisor as analogous to a spiritual director. Just as the director guides the retreatant though the choices of the Exercises the advisor guides the student through the choices of a curriculum.

- Third, our planning needs to address the cost of a Loyola degree and how those costs might be controlled; whether it is through innovation with tuition cost or the time it takes to obtain a degree. We need to examine these possibilities in light of the type of education we offer and the populations we serve.

The plan ought to be developed, as was Loyola 2012, in the normal planning and governance processes of the University. That is, the plan should be developed by the SPT in consultation with the various constituencies of the University (i.e., faculty, staff, and students). It will be an integrated plan that includes finances and facilities. As the plan is developed, the Board should become a partner in the conversation and be part of the development of the plan. At the end of the process I will ask the Board to review and approve the plan as it ought to guide our decision making as we move forward.

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3 The use of any technological innovation, in any field, ought to be directed by our ends/purposes and not simply used mindlessly.
In 2008-2009, the Strategic Planning Team asked me to articulate a vision statement to help them in the development of Loyola 2012. The next plan will also need a vision. The statement below is the first draft of the vision statement for the next plan.

The development of the next plan will need to engage creatively our mission, tradition, and the evolving future and changing trends in higher education. We have a mission of education shaped by over four centuries of lived experience. It is a tradition that is grounded in a vision of education which understands that knowledge is more than information and that the true measure of our work is in what our students become as human beings and citizens.

**Draft Vision Statement**

As a Catholic, Jesuit University, Loyola University New Orleans is an academic community that is committed to the education of the whole person so that they might lead meaningful lives with and for others and in so doing serve society.

Our educational model is grounded in the liberal arts and sciences, as a way to free the person intellectually, while also offering opportunities for professional studies in undergraduate and selected graduate programs.

Believing that knowledge is developmental, and not static, the University seeks to encourage and support research by both faculty and students. The integration of the classroom experience and research enriches the lives of students and faculty.

Loyola assumes that education is holistic and takes place in all aspects of a student’s life. Undergraduate education takes place in the classroom, library, residence halls, student clubs, sporting teams, and the whole ambit of Student Affairs. We assume that one of the hallmarks of Jesuit education is a holistic approach to advising whether in real time or on line.

The goal of a Loyola education is more than the accumulation of information. A Loyola education should help students become critical thinkers so they might distinguish true information from false and good information from bad. A Loyola education ought to shape students who can be articulate in whatever medium is used. A Loyola education also ought to form better persons and help to create a better society.

To meet these goals, the University will strive to become an increasingly selective university with outstanding liberal arts and sciences, professional, and graduate programs grounded in intellectual rigor and reflecting the more than 450 year Ignatian tradition.