
ASSUMPTION COLLEGE
WORCESTER, MASSACHUSETTS | ROME, ITALY



SEPTEMBER 2019

Convocation Address delivered on September 23, 2019



Dear Assumption Community:

As we gather this afternoon, we do so amidst a period of change – a time of transition to something greater.

- The institution has reorganised into separate schools led by deans.
- New academic programs and extra-curricular activities have been introduced.
- A new health sciences building is under construction.
- The application before the state to attain university status continues to advance.

This period of change for the institution occurs as the number of high school graduates – particularly in New England – is declining. As you heard in our campus-wide workshop last week, many questions cloud the future of institutions like ours. Will we remain the same size? If not, how will we adapt? Through the transition to the new school structure and possibly becoming a university, how can Assumption become a more selective institution?

These are just some of the questions that must be addressed as we continue to navigate this period of challenge for higher education and as we finalise the next Strategic Plan. However, I am confident that we can confront the challenges and address these and many other questions, because we do so with years of preparation behind us and our belief in the value of the education we provide that has attracted students for many generations.

While much has changed, both physically and structurally, much has remained the same. We are still an institution guided by a mission that strives to form graduates known for critical intelligence, thoughtful citizenship and compassionate service. That mission will only strengthen as we proceed through this period of transition, one that instills a sense of promise and hope for our students, alumni, faculty and staff.

It is worth repeating what I said at last week's workshop. As we plan for the future of Assumption, it is crucial that the emerging Assumption is in continuity with its past and its rich heritage. When re-founding is not in continuity with the past, an institution no longer knows itself and therefore loses its essence, loses its soul, indeed loses its direction. When that happens, our distinctiveness is lost and we are swallowed up into a sea of homogeneity that makes it difficult, if not impossible, to stand apart from other institutions. During this period of transition, let us not forget that our education has as its purpose forming students into a better version of themselves, or as St. Augustine said, "To become what we are not yet."

Our educational mission is about becoming, about shaping the soul, of striving to attain the fullness of one's potential, one's inherent greatness. This is a life-long journey, which is aptly captured in the motto of the College, "…until Christ be formed in you," which will come to its final attainment when we come to the end of this journey of life.

To prepare students to embark on this life-long journey we need them to encounter the great questions confronted by humanity in every generation and across the traditional liberal arts and sciences – philosophy, literature, art, science, theology, politics.

At the center of our educational mission is the most fundamental question we need our students to ask – what is the meaning of life. And in discerning the answer to this question, our goal needs to be, as Fr. D'Alson made so clear, forming young people of character.

In the midst of all of the changes underway, the enduring nature of our educational mission as I have just described must be our guiding force. If it is, our students will be fundamentally changed, allowing them to live out their vocations in such a way as they will make the world a better place. This will not happen because of the skills they acquire while they are here, but rather because of who they have become first and foremost. Anything else they may do professionally or personally will flow from that inner transformation, or put another way, the formation they received that will allow them to live a fulfilling and honorable life. Isn't that, in the end, the purpose of a Catholic, liberal arts education?

  NOTES FROM The President's Desk - PDF file