

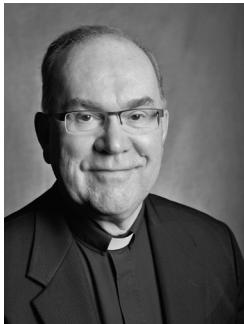
INAUGURAL LECTURE

2014

Two Universities,
One Jesuit Mission

Fr. Stephen V. Sundborg, S.J.
President, Seattle University

Managua, Nicaragua



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Let me begin by extending my congratulations to Fr. Jose Alberto Idiáquez, S.J. in his inauguration as Rector of the University of Central America, Managua. I welcome him to the responsibility, the challenge, and the great joy of leadership of a Jesuit university which I also share. My hope is that this visit of a delegation of leaders from a Jesuit university in the United States, Seattle University, will be a support of his leadership here and some indication of the kind of things he is interested in bringing about here.

We come at Fr. Chepe's express and cordial invitation, an invitation he extended to us personally several months ago on our

campus and one which he hoped would be fulfilled shortly after his inauguration so that it would be made clear to all that he is very interested in expanding and making more concrete the reality of the global network of Jesuit universities, and in particular a close partnership between our two Jesuit universities. We are here to work on the specific and practical forms our mutual partnership will take and to sign an agreement which commits both of our universities on an equal basis to this ongoing partnership.

Within the context of North-South university partnerships and considering the need to adapt to a global world, our joint effort aims at innovative ways in

which universities develop, maintain and strengthen their partnerships. In the changing global context, ours is a collaborative approach that represents a departure from more traditional styles of alliance, focusing on the promotion of a culture of mutual learning and innovation based on truly collaborative research and learning networks, as opposed to the still prevalent model of knowledge sharing.

Let me introduce the members of our delegation from Seattle University. They were selected because of the key roles of leadership they hold and the authority and experience they bring to make our partnership with you real and productive. Dr. Victoria Jones is the Associate Provost for Global Engagement and in this capacity oversees the multiple ways Seattle University is growing in its international connections, study abroad programs, faculty exchanges and global research, as well as in the globalization of our own curriculum. Dr. David Powers is the Dean of the largest of the eight schools or colleges of Seattle University, the College of Arts and Sciences, which on both the undergraduate and graduate levels perhaps

most clearly embodies academically the purposes of Jesuit education in our university. Dr. Serena Cosgrove, herself a graduate of Seattle University and with a daughter currently one of our students, is a professor in our unique Matteo Ricci College and a leading scholar in Latin American issues and in particular in the leadership of women in Latin America. Dr. Joseph Orlando is the Assistant Vice President for Mission and Ministry. In this capacity he leads the programs, particularly for faculty and staff, which broaden and deepen our Ignatian and Jesuit identity. He also has much experience with Nicaragua, having led annual delegations of faculty and staff here for a dozen years. We believe we have the right team at hand in order to engage with you in making our partnership real. I believe we will all look back on this visit in the early weeks of Fr. Chepe's term as historic for how two universities can both benefit from and enrich the other in their Jesuit mission. Again thank you for inviting us.

I wish to talk about "Two Universities; One Jesuit Mission". In order to do that, let me: a) first tell you something about our

university; then, b) try to distill from my seventeen years of experience as president of Seattle University what I have learned about making mission real in a Jesuit university; and, c) finally propose some lines of thought for what our partnership might be. I look forward to Fr. Chepe's response to my comments and our discussion of these topics and this partnership with you both now and in the many exchanges we will have in the years to come.

A. Seattle University: Who are we?

I am, as I mentioned, in my 17th year as president of Seattle University. We have terms of office of five years, but they are renewable by the vote of a 35-member Board of Trustees which oversees the university and to whom I am responsible. So I am in my fourth five-year term. One of the reasons presidents of the 28 Jesuit universities in the United States have such long terms is that in our system as private universities we need to do major fundraising to support our institutions and that requires many, many years of consistent work by a president if it is to be successful. We have 4,500 undergraduate students—mostly between the ages of 18 and 22—and 3,000 graduate students in more professional areas, all of these across eight colleges or schools of Arts and Sciences, Science and Engineering, Business, Education, Nursing, Law, Theology and Ministry, and Matteo Ricci College. Six hundred of our students

are international students, coming to us from other countries, the majority from Asia.

There are approximately 650 faculty and 700 staff at Seattle University for an overall ratio of 13 students for each professor, and 6 students per faculty and staff combined. U.S. universities are extraordinarily developed in their facilities programs and services to their students and so demand high levels of personnel. 2,100 of our students live on campus in residence halls. Our budget for a year is about \$210 million. The typical total cost for a student, all things considered and with all financial aid received, is about \$30,000 a year. I am assisted in overseeing all of this by eleven vice presidents.

We are situated on a beautiful 53-acre (21.5 hectares), quite modern campus perched on a hill on the edge of the skyscrapers of downtown Seattle with views on a clear day of snow-capped mountain ranges beyond our bays and lakes. We draw much of our strength and character as a university from the metropolis of Seattle with its culture, music, entrepreneurial spirit, progressive and ecological values, its energy as a trade

center toward Asia, and the vibrancy of such companies as Microsoft, Amazon.com, Starbucks, and Boeing. In effect we are one of the youngest, most vibrant, most future-focused, best-educated, and most beautiful cities in our country. It is a great city for our university and our students. It significantly shapes the kind of Jesuit university we are as Managua shapes you. We are also in a city and region of the United States which is the least religious. Of all 28 Jesuit universities in our country, we have the lowest percentage of Catholics, at 30%, but we believe we have the strongest Jesuit identity of them all.

Our students come to us because they want an urban university experience, a highly diverse student body of progressive and inclusive environment. A university engaged in the issues of the day with a clear commitment to service and justice, a globally engaged institution, and a place where you can be just who you are, whoever you are. Our students are not wealthy or elite. They and their families are willing to sacrifice for our kind of education. Above all they want to do something with their

lives and to make a difference in the world. The best thing about Seattle University is its students.

Take all of that description of Seattle University and—because it came from its university president—cut it by about a third in its positive exaggeration and you are probably close to what we really are! This is the university which wants to be in partnership with the UCA as another Jesuit university and a quite different one so that the partnership is genuinely and mutually enriching, within a common Jesuit mission.

B. Making mission real in a Jesuit university

I now turn to talking about what I have learned over these years about how to make mission real in a Jesuit university.

Let me use a metaphor from the bible to give structure to my comments. When David, as a youth, went out to confront Goliath the Philistine, the Book of Kings says: “David selected five smooth stones from the wadi and put them in the pocket of his shepherd’s bag. With his sling also ready to hand, he approached the Philistine.” In a moment as they ran toward one another, the text continues: “David put his hand into the bag and took out a stone, hurled it with the sling, and struck the Philistine on the forehead. The stone embedded itself in his brow, and he fell prostrate on the ground.” (2 Kings 17)

I want to select five smooth stones from my experience about making the Jesuit

mission real. I have learned these five stones are powerful tools for doing what God calls us to do. I hope at least one will be powerful for you. Unlike David, I will toss all five toward you from the sling of my experience as a Jesuit president who has worked to realize this mission in the university which seeks to partner with you.

1) Getting the mission right

Everyone who visits Seattle University, whether as part of an accreditation team, or applying for a position, or as consultants for various initiatives, exclaims on how pervasive our mission is throughout the universities and in all persons, whether faculty, staff, students, advisory boards, or recent alumni. We are not only mission-oriented, but mission-driven and mission-animated. How did this come about and what difference does it make?

When I came to our university as its president we had an 8-page, single-spaced mission statement which was highly polished, philosophically elegant, all-inclusive... and totally unmemorable.

The trustees, coming from the corporate world and with their way of focusing their businesses, challenged us to come up with a clear, one-sentence mission statement, which would truly guide the university. At first I resisted them but then set about to try it, demanding that it not be the product of a committee but that I remain its author and give it a personal voice. I sat down and gave it a try, then over the course of a whole year, brought back version after repeatedly-improved version to one group of the university after another, thirty groups in all, in listening sessions which led to honing, to rewriting, and eventually to the statement approved by the Board of Trustees. The mission of our Jesuit Catholic university states: “Seattle University is dedicated to educating the whole person, to professional formation, and to empowering leaders for a just and humane world.” Every word counts; every word comes from living, committed people.

We then almost literally nailed the mission statement to the wall at the entrance to every building on campus, put it on every document or communication, found it—big

surprise!—on every request from divisions of the university for funds, recruited students with it, raised money through it, and were delighted when students annually acted out the mission statement in a skit for new students. No one does not know it, though they put it in their own words, or shorten it to that concluding “empowering leaders for a just and human world” as our ultimate purpose or mission. I would never have believed in advance that one sentence could so transform and unify as complex an organization as ours, but it did and it continues to do so. There is something about where it came from, its credibility, its energy, and the persistence in its use that has made it the true, operative, and effective statement of our mission as a Jesuit university. So the first smooth stone I sling at you is, “You’ve got to get the mission right.”

2) The new era of lay Jesuit educational leadership

The biggest challenge of all in making the mission real in a Jesuit university from my experience is the “who” that will now

carry the Jesuit mission. (By the way, I use “Jesuit” rather than “Ignatian” because the educational tradition and mission in our institution is more than inspired by Ignatian spirituality as anyone or anything can be, but has a definite shape from a long tradition which is properly “Jesuit education” not “Ignatian education”, just as Jesuits themselves are more and other than just inspired by Ignatian spirituality, not “Ignatians”, but “Jesuits”.) The “who” that will and already are increasingly and necessarily leading our Jesuit educational mission are not Jesuits, but lay persons. This is a new era of Jesuit leadership, lay Jesuit leadership, and it is in my experience a huge challenge and a most welcomed and promising one.

This does not come about on its own either easily or just by the changing demographics of our university colleagues. At our university, for example, less than 2% of the faculty and staff are Jesuits. My second smooth stone I toss is that shaping the new era of lay leadership of Jesuit mission comes about through a very intentional, concerted, and well-funded

set of programs to enable lay persons to lead Jesuit universities in their own way within the Jesuit tradition. We are quite advanced in this and are experiencing the results. We've been working at it for 25 years. Just to name the programs for faculty and staff: we have a 5-times a year gathering of Colleagues in Jesuit Education, a bi-weekly in-depth Arrupe Seminar for faculty and staff in the origins and history of Ignatian spirituality and Jesuit education, an annual Mission Day, the sponsoring of silent retreats and the Spiritual Exercises in Everyday Life, a series of orientation programs, an endowed fund for faculty and staff development in mission, and a wonderful new range of national programs—one for 18 months—for formation of leaders in the spirituality and tradition which animates our Jesuit universities.

If we are serious about who will lead our Jesuit universities and are committed to how lay people can do this in a faithful, yet new and promising way by making it their own, we have to be serious in funding, staffing, and in being creative in

developing programs of both widespread and deeper formation in what makes Jesuit education to be Jesuit. This second stone is a very big one, the heaviest of all. We are interested in learning what you do here in Managua in this regard and seeing what we can together share and can learn from one another. I hope you have caught this stone which I have sent your way!

3) More by contact than by concept

In regard to actualizing the Jesuit mission in our universities, I have learned that it does not become real unless it is put in practice, is experienced, is learned and “sticks” in us through actual contact with others. Our common mission is, in Fr. Arrupe's words, “one of forming our students as men and women for others” but this cannot become real unless, in Fr. Kolvenbach's words, they learn this “more by contact than by concept”. It's one thing to have a strong Jesuit mission internal to the university; it is another for this to become actualized and made real by how the university and its students live out—and thereby learn more

deeply—the mission in how they engage with, learn from, and serve others outside of the university. Our students want this and are more courageous in doing this than we their mentors are. Let me give just a few examples.

Several years ago we took on the challenge across the university to study homelessness. We learned so much, but it only became real for us when—somewhat against my own cautious judgment—we invited a homeless encampment of 100 people to pitch their tents on our campus and to be part of our university during a wet month in the winter. Every part of our university, every college, school, department, program, and large numbers of our students, faculty and staff engaged with the homeless, served them, learned from them, and became their friends. Our learning, our mission became real, and our biggest learning was that we overcame our fear of the homeless.

A second example is a much bigger and more permanent way of putting the mission in practice and learning from

contact. Currently three-fourths of our students have embedded in their courses—in all disciplines—a component we call “community-engaged learning”, engaging in a structured way with the community and bringing that experience back into the classroom as an integral part of whatever is the subject of the course. More strikingly we have now established what we call a “Youth Initiative” which works with the families, kids, community centers, housing projects and, above all, public schools in a 100-block area near our campus of people poor economically but rich in culture and community. In the course of a year as many as 1,350 of our students work in this Youth Initiative, especially in the schools with the kids. We work in three schools, some of the poorest in our city, with 1,850 students, 850 of whom we know will not make it through school to college without help from us, belief in them from their families, and support from their communities. This is our largest single project of moving from concept to contact—and, of course, to better concept—in making real our Jesuit educational mission. Even more than transforming this neighborhood, it is transforming our university.

So, the third smooth stone is that what really makes the mission real is this kind of contact. We have it in all eight colleges and schools in hundreds of ways. We provide three days of paid leave each year for staff to be engaged in service works of justice in the community, and we unify the whole university in its mission in this all-encompassing Youth Initiative in our own neighborhood. We believe that it is especially in this area that we can learn from you about how the Jesuit mission of your university is concretized in your communities, city, and country and makes for a better education for your students.

4) The Core Curriculum and centers

The fourth smooth stone in my sling from the wadi is the conviction that to make the Jesuit mission real it needs to be embedded, not in the forehead of Goliath, but in the core academic curriculum of the university, where it reaches all students, but also needs to be manifested in particular academic centers which reach out in specific ways, especially through scholarship, to critical issues.

Behind every Jesuit university is an academic core or set of principles, however it is embodied, which is the great, great grandchild of the ratio studiorum of Jesuit education from five centuries ago. We believe that what we call “The Core” carries the Jesuit educational mission. Ours is a set of sequenced courses over several years, one set building on another, with smaller classes and closer contact with faculty of intellectual passion in which the students essentially learn to think, to imagine to communicate, and to choose in that way of depth which is the opposite of what Fr. Nicolas warns in his famous “globalization of superficiality”.

We have just revised completely our core curriculum to engage the student more quickly and interestedly, to integrate religion better, to increase scientific knowledge, and to widen the global understanding of the student of—as Fr. Kolvenbach called for—“a well-educated solidarity”. If you believe in the Jesuit mission, you know it has to be enacted above all in the curriculum, and you approach revising your core academic programs with care and

trepidation because of the weight it must bear. We are interested to learn how you make “the center hold” in the academic programs for all your students within your Jesuit educational mission.

If this is the core of Jesuit education it must also reach out, especially through research, in particular ways dependent on the context and what I believe you call the “proyecto social” of the university. We do this at Seattle University mainly through specialized “centers”. Some of ours are: The Center for the Study of Justice in Society, The Poverty Education Center, The Center for Environmental Justice and Sustainability, The Institute for Catholic Thought and Culture, The Entrepreneurship Center, The Center for Access to Justice, and a half-dozen more. Each of these provides resources and collegueship for scholarship on issues of particular importance to a Jesuit university beyond scholarship in each discipline. This combination of the core of the Jesuit academic program and the outreach through centers to the periphery where the university meets the culture are key to making the Jesuit mission effective

at both of our universities. Again, we are most interested in learning how you do this, especially how you organize and focus research in a Jesuit way, and in seeing how we might do it together.

5) Jesuit is easy; Catholic is hard

The final stone is actually not all that smooth and it fails to reach its target. What I want to say is that though it is relatively easy to promote the Jesuit mission and that it is widely and enthusiastically embraced by all at our university, it is extremely difficult to promote or at times even to get a hearing for the Catholic mission of our university. Is this issue familiar to you? We’d like to know your experiences.

I learned fifteen years ago that if you give your faculty and staff (and even your students) a vote about how much they would want to enhance the Jesuit character of their university and how much they would support the Catholic character, they would strongly vote to strengthen the Jesuit aspect and would not move the needle on the dial of the

Catholic dimension: “Jesuit, yes; Catholic, not so sure!” It is not that we have not tried, but I would not be confident about how much success we have had. The issue may be different for us living in the most progressive and least religious city in the United States from what it is for you. In the US some people are choosing which parts of Catholic they like and don’t like and that makes it difficult to use Catholic as a whole. People in the US like Catholic charity and service to the poor. They like the focus on strengthening families. But they are rejecting the way the Catholic church guides other parts of their lives like family planning and other things which have become controversial to many people.

But I would bet that there is some significant way in which this challenge of making the Catholic mission real also shows its head among you. Perhaps there will be a “Pope Francis Effect” which will allow us to get beyond the hot button moral and usually sexual issues with which the Church is identified and which block most of our faculty, staff, and students from seeing the positive, rich, deep, important, critically-

needed dimensions of our full Catholic reality, of which the Jesuit mission is one very attractive expression. I’m not talking only about critiques we receive from our bishops about our Catholic character as a university, though we have those; I’m talking more about how I and other Jesuits and Catholics of our faculty and staff are concerned about how we retain our Catholic identity. We have a Catholic dimension inserted in the core curriculum, we have a vibrant campus ministry and sacramental life; and we have a new Institute for Catholic Thought and Culture. However, our purchase academically, educationally, and formationally on our Catholic mission and character is slippery. What can we learn in our partnership about this essential aspect of making our mission real in our universities? (I told you this was not a smooth stone and did not reach its target; how do we make it smooth and speedy and powerful?)

C. Envisioning the partnership

In the last part of my remarks on what I hope is an historic day of signing a partnership commitment between us, let me speak of some lines of thought (written before these last two days of intensive work and therefore needing to be adjusted in their light) about what our partnership might look like.

For some years now Seattle University, under the leadership of Dr. Victoria Jones, our Associate Provost for Global Engagement, has been seeking to develop a set of what we have called “Convergence Sites” in four or five places around the world. She has used the word “convergence” because we have wanted each of these to be a place where several things converge: a Jesuit university or education center, a realistic engagement in the local community of the place in service learning, an interest in a common set of research issues which are amenable to collaborative scholarship, a culture significantly different from our

own, a willingness to work out all of the logistics of finances, travel, residences, insurance, safety, schedules, etc., and for the sake of all of this a convergence of common commitment.

Not only have we sought to develop these convergence sites, but we have wanted to start with you, with Nicaragua, with UCA Managua. We’ve had some strong headwinds against the term “convergence sites” because it has sounded like a weather pattern, and a bad one at that! So we’ve simplified this and we are suggesting it be called from our side, “The Nicaragua Initiative”. For both of us it could be “The UCA-SU Initiative”.

“Initiative” is not quite the right word either, because to “initiate” means to start or begin. We believe we have already started in many different ways over many years with mutual visits and explorations, and we would not be here together this week and this day if we were not already quite engaged. So maybe the image is that of marriage, in that there has already been a time of getting to know one another and even of engagement, such that what we are doing today is, in effect, signing a

prenuptial agreement between us! What might the commitments in it be?

First of all let's start with students; where we should always begin. We want your students to meet and to get to know and enjoy our students and to have ours come to be on your campus, in your classrooms and programs, in your communities of service and projects of justice. We want our colleagues to know the ideals of the students of both of our universities. So the first commitment is to work out how we can develop exchange programs of students, their academic focus, their scheduling, their funding, their living arrangements, etc. At first this can only include or reach a few of our students from each university, but by being persistent and continuous in doing this, could it have a much wider effect for both of us in how students develop their connections through the technologies at which they are so adept?

Staying with the experience of students, what can our students not get in Seattle and your students not get in Managua first of all academically, but then more experientially through in-depth immersion in language and culture and in contact with the people of our cities and countries, contact integrated

in their academic disciplines, contact which serves learning. Can we commit that we will work for a kind of experience of Jesuit education and outreach in service and in social justice—always integrated academically—which will be unique and cannot be available for our students through usual study abroad programs? So, the first item in this prenuptial agreement is being clear about what we are committing ourselves to for the sake of our students and their Jesuit education. I hope you are as confident as I am that our students will inspire you as you are sure your students will inspire us. Let's prove that belief in them!

Secondly, what can we envision and what can we commit to for our faculty? We evaluate faculty according to three things: teaching, scholarship, and service to the university. Before proceeding to speak principally of the role of faculty in our partnership, I want to say that I know that much of the actual mission and life of our university—and I'm sure yours as well—is the result of the work, the commitment, and the creativity of staff. Because of the wide variety of their ways of leadership and service—and in practice of the shaping of our universities—they are not as easily evaluated or described as are faculty. I am confident though that their contribution

to the relationship of our two universities and how they will be affected by it will be both critical to the reality of our partnership and significant for them.

We want your professors to teach our students on our campus, and we want our faculty to teach your students on your campus. I am sure we each have professors specialized in certain areas and with particular intellectual passions which we cannot match separately. If we can start small and can manage the language hurdle—perhaps also at times through teaching in our own language on the other campus—how much richer can our universities be together than we can be apart? What are the opportunities of technology which make this more feasible than we could have imagined before?

Scholarship or research of faculty is a wide open and most promising area of partnership. Faculty of both of our universities, if we can introduce and link them, can discover areas of joint scholarship of unique quality inherently and as part of the Jesuit agenda. This probably needs to begin with the opportunity for some extended periods of residing at the other university and exploring the opportunities of mutual scholarship with counterparts.

Once contact and the creativity which will come from it have developed, it can branch into more interdisciplinary research and into wider networks of common research aided by technology. We are increasingly including our students in joint professor-student research. Are you doing the same and how could this be part of our partnership?

In regard to service to the university—the third category of evaluation of faculty—wouldn't the biggest contribution likely be in learning from one another new forms of pedagogy, course design, educational assessment, academic discipline development, interdisciplinary instruction, new and emerging majors, programs, certificates, and applications? What commitments we make to one another about faculty will—as faculty are themselves—be at the heart of what the impact will be on the students we serve and the universities we are.

Let me conclude by asking, can our partnership make our universities themselves different? I believe it can in the more obvious ways of learning from one another how our universities are structured and function and allowing this knowledge to open us to consider new ways to act. I wish, however, to ask the question

of whether our partnership can make our universities different at a more fundamental level.

Seattle University is not currently aligned with any other university in a special or unique way, although we are affiliated widely with many universities. Of special importance for us are the 27 other Jesuit universities of the United States with whom we collaborate in dozens of practical ways. I have been the chair of the board of the presidents of this association of 28 Jesuit universities for the past three years. I recognize that you too find of particular importance your association with all of the universities of AUSJAL and even more so the connections of the three Jesuit universities in Central America. These associations are very important.

Is there also room and do we want and intend a kind of relationship between Seattle University and University of Central America, Managua, which is not repeated or equaled by our relationship with any other single university? This is perhaps the area of prenuptial agreement which is most important for us to decide and commit to and yet is the most difficult for us to foresee or to predict in regard to how real it will be and the difference it will make.

It comes down to the question of how serious we are in choosing each other as partners. It certainly needs time to develop, as we must start slowly and in smaller ways, and it must be very practical, in order to see what emerges. So perhaps it is a prenuptial agreement with a further time of engagement before a unique relationship between our universities will become evident and proven. I don't think we can promise anything more to one another today than that we will both try to make our two universities with one single Jesuit mission a unique, committed, and fully mutual relationship made hopeful by the vision of what that might indeed mean for each of us and for both of us together.

I am delighted to commit to our partnership today on behalf of Seattle University and together with our delegation. I look forward to signing with Fr. Chepe the agreement between our two universities. I again extend my congratulations to him and I express my confidence in his leadership of your university. I am so grateful for your welcome here in Managua, I invite you to come to Seattle, and I trust in a future which will require the work of us all and the Holy Spirit working within our collegueship and friendship.



Universidad Jesuita

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