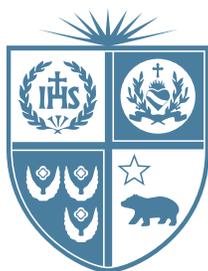




**THE INAUGURATION OF TIMOTHY LAW SNYDER  
SIXTEENTH PRESIDENT OF LOYOLA MARYMOUNT UNIVERSITY**



## **Presidential Inauguration Address by Timothy Law Snyder, Ph.D.**

16TH PRESIDENT OF LOYOLA MARYMOUNT UNIVERSITY

*Delivered on October 6, 2015 in Los Angeles, California.*

Chair Aikenhead; members of our Board of Trustees and Board of Regents; President Burcham and President Lawton; Bishops Clark and Bennett; leaders of our founding orders, Father Weiler, Sister Treacy and Sister Ingham; Sister Linda and Brother Scott—and other members of my family, including Carol, my spouse; faculty, staff, administrators, alumni, and friends; and students of Loyola Marymount University: I am honored to welcome you as you have so warmly welcomed me.

When we imagine as LMU, a Jesuit and Marymount institution, we imagine restlessly, engaging St. Ignatius of Loyola's *magis*, seeking to partner with each other, and with God, to do better for those here, for those to come, and for the Earth itself.

As persons with and for others, we seek to:  
Encourage learning—further;  
Educate the whole person—further; and  
Further the Service of Faith and the Promotion of Justice.

These pillars constitute LMU's mission statement, which distills our founding Jesuit and Marymount heritages into meaningful focus.

As part of Ignatius' demand for the *magis*—that we continually seek to do better—we always seek in our work to leverage our successes to date. I am keenly aware that anything we might accomplish, going forward, is borne on the shoulders of the giants who have preceded us. We have two with us today. Presidents Burcham and Lawton, we are honored by your presence; we are eternally in awe of what you have done for LMU. Thank you.

Let us imagine, together, for these few minutes. Let us imagine globally: geographically, and in time. My remarks revolve around three questions:

Where is our world, today?

Where is LMU, today?

And what should be our vision as a globally imaginative institution, going forward?

Following these questions, I will briefly describe how we will proceed, as an institution, as we stride into our future.

First: our world today.

Change occurs rapidly, and today the speed of change is accelerating. Following the example of Jack Haught, who gave our Academic Inauguration Lecture last week, if we write our human history as a 300-page book, we would find that language and writing first appear on the last page or so of that book. The World Wide Web, which is the same age as the LMU undergraduates who graduated just three years ago, would show up as the last word of our book.

And in that very last word of our 300-page history, something dramatic has happened. We went from communicating with a few dozen people, as we did as individuals for about two million years, to having the ability to expand our human connections. To hundreds, thousands, hundreds of thousands. We now cultivate cross-cultural communication as our agricultural ancestors once cultivated sources of sustenance.

This brings us new burdens—and new opportunities—as we collide with different languages, habits, arts, economies, monies, ecologies, customs, visions and versions of God. Not only has our connectedness changed in breadth and character, but our behaviors, and even our language, have also become furnaces of change. Niche.com reports that three-fifths of our first-year students now use Instagram, Facebook, and Snapchat daily. Two out of three of these, meanwhile, show up, in Microsoft Word 2011 as misspelled—that is, as words thus far unknown.

This is a world in which our children swipe book pictures, expecting them to move, grow, or shrink on command; visitors text on the way, rather than showing up unannounced; and yoga instructors ask, as did mine the other day, upon her arrival, “Is there WiFi so I can Spotify?” This is a world in which, according to the Guardian, every minute we upload 300 hours of YouTube videos. It is one in which our ultimate challenges—no longer territorial skirmishes—erupt as economics, religion, technology, geography, and sociology conflate and conspire.

Meanwhile, as we change our environment faster than we can adapt to it, the evolutionary mechanisms that governed our adaptation to date are suddenly rendered too slow to help us. That means that adaptation is now in our hands. It must come from—for the first time in the history of life—our *minds*.

To what does this lead? Our need to adapt using our minds drives us to be imaginative. Our hyperconnectedness drives us to be global. Responsive universities like LMU must model these characteristics as we lead students to think critically, creatively, and nimbly in ways we never have before.

We next ask, where is LMU today? How are we navigating this world?

Foremost, we educate our students liberally, freeing their minds from the bonds that a given moment's evolutionary outcomes and society impose. LMU's liberal arts-based core curriculum, centered in our Bellarmine College of Liberal Arts, continues to explore life's major questions, staging students with approaches that humankind has taken to them, thus far, and challenging them to become actors in future solutions. Our new core and Bellarmine College's 4-unit course initiative address Father-General Nicolás' concerns about globalized superficiality by bringing new opportunities for students to learn deeply, as well as broadly.

Through this landmark collegial work by the LMU faculty, our students are enabled intellectually nimble, ready for graduate school and professional careers, ready to lead and serve others, and ready to explore lives of meaning and purpose. And: joy! And the world beyond.

At LMU today, we celebrate academic freedom in more powerful ways than do our competitors: Our faculty and student affairs colleagues engage freely in discussions of all things worthy, including faith, which is often taboo in the college classroom and dormitory. We therefore have the capacity to engage a true objectivism—one that explores the integration of our faith and reason—for which Jack Haught has so gracefully called in his writings.

LMU showcases tenured faculty, who are free to explore *counterstreamal* ideas; able to take on problems whose inherent structures may require work of unknown time or unknown difficulty; and not be tempted away—especially at the outset of their careers—as creative thinkers, by professions that may offer greater compensation.

Through LMU's current diversity, we have increased our capacity to navigate humankind's expanded interconnectivity. Minds of different backgrounds and experiences do better than a single mind-frame that is simply amplified by other like thinkers. And make no mistake about it: as is true in the investment world, diversity among thinkers and workers is as conservative a configuration as one might seek: it helps LMU mitigate risk while taking advantage of opportunity.

LMU is diverse in faith, gender, geography, and sexuality, welcoming a spectral community as a university whose success and ability depend on and are in concert with the Catholic recognition of the immutable dignity of each person, created in the image of God. In its welcome, LMU models Pope Francis's call for a "truly tolerant and inclusive" society.

Economic diversity nourishes a learning environment for all students. Our \$100 million Scholarship Initiative also engages the service of faith and the promotion of justice by providing an LMU education to students who otherwise could not afford it. The world wins every time a deserving and capable student thrives through receiving an LMU education. President Burcham, thank you for your extraordinary leadership of this initiative.

Our core curriculum; our academic freedom, empowered through mission; our maintenance and strengthening of tenure among the LMU faculty; and our diversity stake out a unique place for LMU. And amidst this, in many ways, we indeed encourage learning and educate the whole person, especially as our academic and student affairs colleagues collaborate, rather than divide the whole person into partitions to be treated separately.

So that's our world today, and LMU today. We've done well! But, of course, that's when St. Ignatius' *magis* creeps in...asking—heartbeat by heartbeat—how we might do better.

We now move to our third question: What should be our vision as a globally imaginative institution, going forward? I see four key pathways: creative, global, interdisciplinary, and philanthropic.

Before I touch upon these four visionary themes, let me pronounce—firmly—that I am bullish on higher education and its future. While many today like to sing the song of death to higher education, they fail to recognize that the new technologies that they believe threaten traditional education are not new in character. As writing instruments, books, computers, and now the Internet have appeared, traditional, residential education has survived. That happens for three reasons: First, new technologies birth new markets, leaving existing ones intact; Second, traditional institutions are not static—we have a history of inculcating new tools; and Third, the corpus of human knowledge is expanding like wildfire—and, along with it, so is our need for education.

Lee Bolman, of University of Missouri – Kansas City, has asked, “Will we ever be better off with a less-educated citizen?” The answer to this question is not “No;” rather, it is “Never.” In short: education is not a zero-sum enterprise, and it remains poised to thrive.

Which leads us to our four pathways for our global imagination. Our first two paths emanate from the wonder and strength of our location: Los Angeles. Our location motivates us to enrich, deeply, each of LMU's *creative impact* and LMU's *global impact*.

Consider: LA is the most creative city in humankind's history. Nationwide, the arts are flourishing. We teach Millennial students, who, while being the best ever at following tasks, can—and, given our future, must—learn and engage more in creative acts. Our Marymount Sisters view the arts as “the expression of the human spirit sharing in God's creation.”

These are ingredients to a recipe: All creative endeavors at LMU—from our School of Film and Television to our College of Communication and Fine Arts to our innovative programs in the School of Education and in the College of Business Administration—must continue to flourish and be positioned to soar, creatively, further. As part of this, we must partner with and capitalize on opportunities presented by Silicon Beach—be it in new developments near our airport, in our thriving downtown, or in our front yard, Playa Vista.

LA is also a champion global city. We must leverage our location and our opportunities—and the certain call of our students’ futures—by globalizing further, through expanded study abroad, an expanded footprint in Latin and South America and in Asia, and a considered global curriculum, as determined by our capable faculty, who are increasingly international. And though we must exercise caution in assuring that our regional activities never serve as proxy for truly global experience, our outreach and partnership with neighboring communities, particularly our Latino neighbors, must remain vital.

And any time any of us thinks “LMU LA,” of whom do we think? Father Lawton, thank you for revitalizing LMU’s symbiosis with our wondrous City of Angels. And, while we are at a moment of pause, Mayor Garcetti, and all of LA, I am compelled to remind our community that LMU adds nearly one billion dollars to California’s economy, of which \$808 million and over 5300 jobs are concentrated in Los Angeles County.

Our third pathway, *interdisciplinarity*, recognizes that most of what lies between our traditional branches of knowledge remains thus far unexplored. We therefore need to expand our interdisciplinary work. In the same way the stars fuse seemingly disparate particles to create something new, so must we as we carry out our intellectual mission. As part of this, I cite the extraordinary syntheses of our newly-created Academy of Catholic Thought and Imagination, our Center for Urban Resilience, and our M-School. And we applaud the wisdom of our Seaver School’s stunning Life Sciences Building, as it integrates scholars in laboratories that host topically-based, rather than departmentally-based, investigations. We do this because imagination requires that we conjure something new, something yet to be revealed, through encounters that yield unexpected results.

Our fourth pathway is personal for me. I imagine an LMU in which no valuable idea—from a student, faculty member, administrator, staff member, or alum—is left unfunded. I imagine an LMU in which no student capable of receiving an LMU education is denied the opportunity to do so because they cannot afford it.

I therefore imagine an LMU in which every alum is engaged—fiscally—donating, annually. Truly, we cannot do our work alone. With governmental support for higher education waning; with competition for best students, best faculty, and best facilities intensifying; with our challenge to assure an LMU education remains accessible to all continuing: we need accelerated help from

all who care about LMU. We will always call on our alumni and our friends to assist us in our mission, and we thank you for the support that has brought so much of our contemplation into action.

To summarize these four broad pathways: We must strengthen: our creative impact, our global impact, our interdisciplinary impact, and the philanthropy so generously provided by our alumni and friends.

With these pathways in mind, let me now say a few words about how we will proceed, as an institution. In all we do, going forward, we must be not just imaginative, but *boldly* so. We must maintain our fiscal sensibility, yes. And live our values, yes. But in doing so, we also must admit the kinds of risks that ignite our greater dreams.

Being boldly imaginative means two things: First, let us never fall victim to the contemporary habit of predicting long-term trends from short-term data. As an example, in no way can or should we see recent law school enrollment trends to be a bellwether for humankind's need for justice. Justice is at the heart of our mission, and our Loyola Law School is the heart of justice, and the need for justice will remain with us, especially as our world becomes yet more interrelated.

Second, being boldly imaginative means: This university must forever banish the notion and phrase, "Best Kept Secret on the Hill."

We must assess our brand—that which is called forth when our public hear our name—and seek to evolve it.

We must recognize that, humble as we may wish to be, our world has become one in which we must vie with others for the clicks and views on which our reputation depends.

We must champion our internal hunger for swagger and better PR—the very one that caused our swagger posters (248 copies of our 108 posters), in our elevators, to get stolen!

We must bring Lions' pride to our sports teams, whose student athletes boast prowess in academics, as well as athletics. This, as we boast as demanding a curriculum as any. GO LIONS!

Having a creative, global, and interdisciplinary vision, while our philanthropic base blossoms and our prowess becomes better known, will engage our students to take their place in this rapidly changing and interconnected world. As Professor Jennifer Abe said at last Wednesday's inaugural lecture: the "relation of human beings one to another—across the great divides of country, culture, social class, race, language, religion—is one element of our part of the great story, a human-centric version of the interconnection between all elements of the universe from subatomic particles to the divine." LMU has an important role yet to play in this great story.

And in playing, we should heed the advice that the late BB King shared with his fellow musicians: “Learn to play what you want to hear.” Let us imagine what we seek our world to be, and let us guide our students toward fashioning and stewarding such a world, being, as our Provost Joe Hellige reminds us, “not just attentive to what we *can* we accomplish, but also to what we *ought* to accomplish.”

I close by sharing that, as we prepare to embark on our future, we should be bullish on LMU’s future. Let us acknowledge that humankind’s greatest miracle—teaching—rests on another, all-things-considered strange miracle—the *magis*—our incessant restless desire to do better. Nearly 500 years ago, St. Ignatius and his colleagues integrated these into a philosophy and approach that addressed—and continues to address—a world of accelerating change. The Marymount tradition gives us a complementary set of emphases—creativity, connectivity, and the need for us to use them wisely—and, yes, it doubles the religious leadership in gender from what our Jesuit competitors offer. Meanwhile, our Sisters of St. Joseph of Orange continue to bring programs of peace, reconciliation, and justice to our lives. As we contemplate our wildly changing world, as we address that world today, and as our global imagination illuminates pathways into our future, we must accept change, embrace change, imagine, then inspire change. As St. Ignatius charged us to do, let us continue to set the world on fire. We—and the students we transform—are charged with our future.