

# President McGowan Inaugural Address

*The Inaugural Address of Joseph J. McGowan, Jr.*

*The Third President of Bellarmine College*

*Friday, the Twelfth of October, Nineteen Hundred and Ninety*

*... these events remind us once again of the truths that the world is incredibly rich and diverse in its cultures, ethnic groups, races, religions, and creeds, and yet that the world is finally one in its basic humanity, needs and interests.*

## **Bellarmino College: Hope and Vision**

Chairman Thurman, Archbishop Kelly, Mayor Abramson, Judge-Executive Armstrong, members of the Bellarmine community, honored guests, family and friends:

Colleges are hopeful institutions in that they anticipate a future for society and believe that they can play a role in shaping the future and society. While colleges exist *for* the future, they exist *in* the present, and thus their work in shaping the future is made all the easier or all the more difficult, depending on how the world is faring.

I believe that we are beginning to emerge from one of those times in the world in which we have been so consumed by the present, its promises and problems, that we have not been as mindful of our future as we should.

We are, finally, simple creatures who make better sense of our mortal lives and are more fully human when we live with a sense that we are part of the flow of

life, of a continuum, with a future in this world and in the next. If we have a sense of future, we can hope.

We need images and symbols to nurture and sustain hope and we are presently and suddenly awash with such images.

I will briefly identify some of the developments and images in the world, in Kentucky, in Louisville, among college students, and at Bellarmine which nurture hope.

## **In the World**

While we anxiously await developments in the Middle East and pray for a peaceful diplomatic political solution to the situation there, we are just beginning to come to terms with the peace and democracy which has broken out in the rest of the world. Many observations can be made about recent events, but three are particularly significant for me.

The first considers the catastrophic collapse of communism and the rise of democracy in Russia, Germany, and Eastern Europe. While there is serious concern about how economic and social problems in these countries will be resolved, the rate of change, the breadth of change, the depth of change, the direction of change, and the unexpectedness of change have all emphatically affirmed an essential condition of hope... the ever present possibility of change and growth.

The second is that these events, among others, have further deepened our awareness that the international world, of which we are a part, is interconnected and interdependent. Significant developments in the Mid-East crisis include the emergence of the United Nations as a strong and important international authority as well as the broad-based support for international law. From economic markets to environmental issues, the lunar perspective and image of

our planet as one little blue and white ball suspended in the cosmic darkness is increasingly poignant.

The third is that these events remind us once again of the truths that the world is incredibly rich and diverse in its cultures, ethnic groups, races, religions, and creeds, and yet that the world is finally one in its basic humanity, needs and, interests.

*In the Commonwealth of Kentucky, the historic passage of the 1990 Kentucky Education Reform Act has also torn down long standing walls, lifted hearts, and unified our state as we attend to our future in the education of our children.*

## **In Kentucky**

In the Commonwealth of Kentucky, the historic passage of the 1990 Kentucky Education Reform Act has also torn down long standing walls, lifted hearts, and unified our state as we attend to our future in the education of our children.

The promise of this reform is that Kentucky, which already has many of the nation's best primary and secondary schools in its city of Louisville, is now positioned to bring the rest of the state, where needed, to the cutting edge of American education, and, because of the structure and organization of the plan, to maintain that prominence for years to come.

So compelling is the concept and spirit of this reform, directed as it is at primary and secondary education, that the public and private colleges and universities in the state are beginning to work together for the first time in history to develop a coordinated approach to higher education to assure that Kentucky has, and will continue to have, a higher education system which builds on the new strength of its primary and secondary schools.

## **In Louisville**

Through the leadership and spirit of our government, business, and community leaders, including our Jefferson County Judge-Executive David Armstrong and my new kin, Mayor Jerry Abramson, this city and area is experiencing enormous growth, vitality, and progress, and has moved to the forefront of American cities in terms of its dramatic economic growth and exceptional quality of life.

The vision and leadership of the city of Louisville, Jefferson County, and Greater Louisville, including our neighbors just across the Ohio River in Indiana, are being realized and supported by a broad scale cooperative partnership among the government, business, and educational communities in an unprecedented way that is itself a reason for hope.

Reflecting in this unique partnership, and paralleling in local significance the Kentucky Education Reform Act, is a report and a blueprint for the future issued this past Labor Day by the Louisville Chamber of Commerce entitled *Transforming the Present, Shaping the Future*.

This was the first annual report of the Education and Workforce Committee, a strategic alliance to address issues related to a quality workforce for the area. The report notes that over the next five years, employees will need higher levels of education than at the present and that redesigned jobs will reflect advances in the science and technology, as well as in market globalization. Of interest to Robert Bellah, no doubt, would be the report's reminder that in the future, working in teams will play a stronger and more critical role in all industries.

Further, the report calls for employees to have better oral and written communication skills, clearer thinking and better logical reasoning skills, greater self-direction, and a fuller understanding of foreign cultures and languages. It calls for increased reading ability, mathematical understanding and application skills, and increased proficiency with computers and computer applications.

# Among College Students

College students are an important barometer and mirror of what is happening in the larger society and culture. Over the past few years, media and national surveys have regularly noted increases in political apathy, alcohol abuse, crime, racism, psychological stress, and materialism among college students. These matters have appropriately demanded the attention of those of us concerned with students and higher education, not only because of the difficulties these problems create in the present for students and student life, but because of what they might bode for the quality of individual lives and society in the future.

Despite these concerns, even in recent years, college students have encouraged hope as most are happy, competent, and successful individuals, capable of serious academic work when properly taught and challenged, capable of great friendships, of much love, and of dedicated, generous service to others.

Students deserve our greatest respect because coming of age at any time in any society has always been a challenging experience, but today's students must come of age in a rapidly changing, pluralistic, relativistic, materialistic, and competitive world, and must do so in many cases without the benefit of sustaining coherent personal values.

When most of us were growing up, the traditional educating agents in our lives were the family, schools, churches, communities, and government. While television was available, it had not yet emerged as a significant educating agent.

For today's students, however, the power of the traditional educating agents has been diminished by social and cultural developments.

As the power of these educating agents has waned, the power and dominance of television has grown to the point where it is, and has been for some time, the major educating and socializing agent in our society.

The very values – civil, moral, ethical, academic and personal – that we so easily criticize this generation for having lost, have in fact never been possessed by so many of them.

Our educational failures with the young are not so much a function of their inadequacies as learners as they are a function of the inadequacies of the traditional educating agents in comparison to television.

Students are taught materialism, excessive competitiveness, and self-interest through television, but the values which our students need most are not these shallow, fragmented, and transitory ones but rather the deeper, sustaining, traditional human values that are still best taught in families, in schools and in churches, and through the strong support and good example of community and government leaders.

*...Bellarmine was recognized as 10th in the nation among private institutions just ahead of Yale, Columbia, and MIT. Columbia and MIT have recently announced five-year \$1 billion capital campaigns, clearly suggesting their dissatisfaction with living in the shadow of Bellarmine.*

A hopeful phenomenon among the college students in recent years is that despite the inadequacies of our culture's education and socialization process, there still are so many competent, happy, and effective people in our colleges.

And the news is getting even better. College students, in the most recent annual national survey of freshman attitudes, are showing increasing dissatisfaction with a life characterized by little else than the pursuit of wealth and material goods, and are beginning to show significant attitudinal changes. Once again, as in the '60s, but with less innocence and greater maturity, students are expressing greater interest in environmental and other social political and moral issues.

There is among students a growing tendency toward greater activism, as well as an increasing number of students who state that “influencing social values” is “very important to them.” In fact, the percentage of freshmen reporting participation in organized demonstrations in the last year was higher than the percentage reported in the late ‘60s. Further, the highest percentage of students in the survey’s history expressed a strong desire “to influence social values.”

The same national survey, conducted each year for the past 23 years under the direction of Alexander Astin at UCLA, also shows significant increases in the percentage of students who:

- plan to participate in community action;
- wish to promote racial understanding; and
- wish to influence the political structure.

## At Bellarmine

Not only is hope supported by these developments in the world, in Kentucky, in Louisville, and among college students, but also what is happening at Bellarmine. Bellarmine College was recently cited by *Money* magazine in its publication *Money Guide to Best Buys In American Colleges and Universities* as 10th among the 100 best private colleges and universities in the country. Using 17 criteria for academic excellence, and considering academic value in relation to cost, Bellarmine was recognized as 10th in the nation among private institutions just ahead of Yale, Columbia and MIT. Columbia and MIT have recently announced five-year \$1 billion capital campaigns, clearly suggesting their dissatisfaction with living in the shadow of Bellarmine.

The main reason for this recognition and for the academic excellence it represents is the Bellarmine College faculty.

Bellarmino's faculty are the greatest resource of the institution in that they are well qualified, dedicated to teaching and to students, and committed to teaching each student as an individual and as a whole person. Bellarmine's faculty therefore, are not only effective teachers in the classroom, but outside the classroom as well, and our students regularly testify to the faculty's exceptional availability and personal interest.

*Since excellent teaching is Bellarmine's main institutional characteristic and proudest achievement, and since the Bellarmine faculty are collectively the institution's greatest teaching resource, Bellarmine College will do everything in its power to further support and encourage good teaching.*

## **Vision Built On Hope**

The future of Bellarmine College will build on, among other things, the hope nurtured and sustained by developments in today's world, in Kentucky, in Louisville, among college students and at Bellarmine.

## **Faculty**

Since excellence in teaching is Bellarmine's main institutional characteristic and proudest achievement, and since the Bellarmine faculty are collectively the institution's greatest teaching resource, Bellarmine College will do everything in its power to further support and encourage good teaching.

Faculty research, for its own sake and for teaching, will be encouraged and supported as well.

And faculty development, federal and private foundation grantsmanship, competitive compensation at all ranks, and fuller participation in college governance will characterize Bellarmine's faculty life in the years ahead.

# Students

The intellectual and personal growth of students is Bellarmine's major goal.

At Bellarmine, the curriculum and the co-curriculum will be integrated to the fullest extent possible and both will share responsibility for achieving the academic goal of the college for the intellectual and personal growth of students.

In the integrated student life of the college, the sacredness and value of each student as a person will be respected, and diversity in the student body will be aggressively pursued.

Bellarmino students will be encouraged to accept obligations and responsibilities to the larger group, and clear and fair policy and procedure will guide the behavior of students for the common good.

As part of its teaching responsibility to students, Bellarmine College will make every effort to support their intellectual and personal growth to the fullest extent possible. This support will include, among other things, the construction and renovation of facilities to enhance these activities, as well as the appropriate development of staff and budgets; we will have first rate academic support and orientation programs, counseling, career planning and placement, and health services; there will be successful varsity, intramural, and recreational athletic programs; and we will have a strong campus ministry program with ecumenical outreach and oriented toward social and community service.

In Bellarmine College student life, concern for and service to others will be strongly and actively encouraged, as will environmental and international awareness.

To create greater diversity in the student body, to provide more students with the opportunity to live and learn in the college community, and to support broader

regional admissions recruiting, Bellarmine College will continue to implement its plan to increase its resident student population and thus to create a greater residential character for Bellarmine College through the format of residential colleges. The present and traditional commitment to Bellarmine College to commuter students from the Louisville area will be vigorously maintained. The development of the resident student population will augment Bellarmine's traditional commitment to commuter students.

*It is through the liberal arts and sciences that Bellarmine College can best address not only the intellectual and personal educational needs of our students, but the educational needs of Louisville, Kentucky, and the world.*

## **Curriculum**

### ***Liberal Arts and Sciences***

With excellent teaching as the distinguishing characteristic of Bellarmine College, and the intellectual and personal growth of students as our major goal, the liberal arts and sciences are and will continue to be the fundamental disciplines through which the purposes of Bellarmine College are achieved.

It is through the liberal arts and sciences that Bellarmine College can best address not only the intellectual and personal educational needs of our students, but the educational needs of Louisville, Kentucky, and the world.

For these are the disciplines, the organizations of knowledge, the intellectual content which can best educate to international and global awareness, and which can best create an education citizenry in the city and in the commonwealth, including leaders for this area and beyond in education, business, and government.

It is mainly through the liberal arts and sciences that reading, writing, speaking, and thinking skills are most effectively developed, and it is through the

mathematics, science, and computer courses that students are directly familiarized with advances in science and technology, with mathematical understanding and application skills, and with enhanced proficiency in computers and computer application.

Most importantly for human development, it is through the liberal arts and sciences that we can best teach students to understand and appreciate their personal value and self-worth and to develop positive self-esteem. It is through such a curriculum that students can best learn to understand, value, and appreciate others as well in both their diversity in their common human bond.

In the liberal arts, for example, the issues of individualism and commitment to the common good can be considered, as well as materialism and spirituality, competitiveness and cooperation, love and hate, war and peace, and good and evil.

It is through the liberal arts as well that a student can come to more thoroughly understand social institutions like the family, schools, churches, communities, and government. Through the liberal arts, a student can also learn about being a person and about the world in such a way as to enable him or her to have a strong family, to create good schools, to participate fully in the life of his or her church, and to be as successful and worthy community or government leader.

Finally, knowledge in the liberal arts and sciences has such a broad range and integrity that new alliances of traditional disciplines allow for many important and compelling interdisciplinary approaches to the study, among other things, of human experience.

The study of mass communication, for example, has emerged as a legitimate interdisciplinary area of knowledge and is an important vehicle for helping

students understand the mass media for enabling them to use for their intellectual and personal growth, rather than as a mindless distraction from it.

*As an application of its commitment to the liberal arts and sciences as the keystone of its academic programs, and as a further reflection of its commitment to the workforce of the city, state, and region, Bellarmine college will continue to improve and develop its professional schools and programs in business, nursing and education.*

### ***Professional Education***

As an application of its commitment to the liberal arts and sciences as the keystone of its academic programs, and as a further reflection of its commitment to the workforce of the city, state, and region, Bellarmine college will continue to improve and develop its professional schools and programs in business, nursing and education.

The purpose of these programs is to produce for the regional, national, and international workforce, men and women educated in the full knowledge, competencies, and skills of their individual professions, but educated as well in the liberal arts and sciences, and thus informed in their professional life by the deeper, sustaining intellectual and personal values available through the study of the liberal arts.

Bellarmino will continue through its liberal arts and science graduates, as well as through its business, nursing, and education graduates to serve Louisville, and Kentucky, and the world with ethical, moral, dedicated, and competent professionals.

### ***Adult and Continuing Education***

Finally, Adult and Continuing Education at Bellarmine has been steadily growing in recent years as many new programs have been developed and have

succeeded and will continue to develop and support this important activity of the college.

## Facilities

To grow as an institution and to bring Bellarmine College to its next level requires major capital investment in new and renovated facilities.

Planned for student life are new residence halls, renovated residence halls, and expanded food service facilities, a lifetime and recreation sports facility, a student services building, and a new improved student center.

While these facilities are needed, planned, and will be built as soon as possible within the next few years, two facilities have first priority – a classroom and office facility for the Allan and Donna Lansing School of Nursing and Education, and Bellarmine College Library.

It is my pleasure on this delightful occasion to announce our plans to break ground for the Nursing and Education School on March 22, 1991 with anticipated completion for the spring, 1992 semester. In addition to providing more comfortable and attractive quarters for the School of Nursing and Education, this facility will provide the overall college with much needed classroom space.

Secondly, it is my distinct personal pleasure, given all that has been said today about the centrality and importance of our academic life, to announce our plans to break ground on the new Bellarmine College Library in March, 1992 with expected completion for the fall, 1993 semester.

*Beyond the campaign, however, I am personally committed to subsequently and substantially increasing our endowment within the next 10 years, with unrestricted and restricted funds sought for faculty chairs, financial aid, and scholarships for top scholars, international students and student leaders.*

## Resources

Other than tuition and fees, the major sources of college revenue are funds raised for capital projects, funds raised to increase the endowment, and funds raised by the endowment.

Bellarmino College is in the midst of a \$20 million capital campaign to fund the library, the School of Nursing and Education, and several of the other projects already mentioned. This campaign is well along, and with three and a half years to go, I am pleased to report that \$16.8 million have already been raised. We look forward to the successful completion of the campaign and to the completion of the projects it will fund.

Beyond the campaign, however, I am personally committed to subsequently and substantially increasing our endowment within the next 10 years, with unrestricted and restricted funds sought for faculty chairs, financial aid, and scholarships for top scholars, international and minority students, and student leaders.

## Conclusion

While an institutional vision looks to a future based on an understanding of the present, we must keep in mind that the present includes the past.

And so my vision for Bellarmine College includes the past and the present and thus achieves perspective and texture.

A Bellarmine faculty member recently told me something that would make Yogi Berra proud. He said that “while Bellarmine is very young, it has had a long history.”

I don't think he knew how right he was, for the history of Bellarmine and therefore my vision for the institution goes back well past its mere 40 years of existence, past my distinguished and youthful predecessors, all of whom, marvelously, share the dais with me this afternoon; past the Jesuits who left a college in St. Mary, Kentucky in the 1840s to staff and develop Fordham University which celebrates its 150th year; - past the brilliant and controversial Roberto Bellarmino, and all the way back to those identified in Professor Wade Hall's beautiful commemorative poem – to "Aristotle and Thomas and Homer."

In my vision for Bellarmine, therefore, I acknowledge all those who have thought or spoken or written about the liberal arts and sciences through the ages.

*My role as president it to understand, interpret, and advance this collective vision of the Bellarmine community, a great vision build on great hope... I ask you to join and support me, and I ask our God to bless us all as we now begin together to realize the rich vision and enormous potential of Bellarmine College "in veritatis amore."*

I acknowledge the Catholic origin and tradition of Bellarmine College and the pioneers of the Catholic higher education in Kentucky, most notably for us Archbishop Floersch who founded Bellarmine. We will respect that tradition in the academic excellence of our programs, in a vigorous intellectual climate which affirms among other things the compatibility of faith and reason, and in the nurturance of a college community and culture which reflects basic Judeo-Christian values, including concern for each individual as a whole person, and caring for and service to others.

I acknowledge the brilliance, vision, and generosity of spirit which characterized the presidencies of Msgr. Horrigan, Sr. Angelice, and most recently Dr. Petrick, after whom we have just named our new residence hall.

I acknowledge Fr. Louis, Thomas Merton, whose intellectual and spiritual presence is palpable among the gentle hills and glades of this beautiful campus and whose intellect, ideas, values, and spirit will inspire the development of Bellarmine College as the intellectual center of the region considering such issues as peace and justice, world religions, and East-West and North-South dialogues.

I acknowledge the 8,000 alumni and alumnae of Bellarmine College from the pioneer class of 1954 to the present, as well as the alumnae of Ursuline College, our mother's maiden name, who graduated in the distinguished Ursuline education tradition in Kentucky from the '20s to the 60s. All of you are the legacy of Bellarmine and a proud legacy you are.

And finally, I acknowledge the trustees, faculty, students, and administrators of Bellarmine, as I am fully aware of my vision for Bellarmine is actually our vision and the vision of ages past.

My role as president is to understand, interpret, and advance this collective vision of the Bellarmine community, a great vision built on great hope.

And hope does ring out today in all its glory... from Berlin to Bellarmine, from Leningrad to Louisville, from Yokahoma to Okolona, and from Rone to Rooster Run... hope does ring out.

I am mindful of this hope and of all of you today as I formally assume the presidency of this special place. I ask you to join and support me, and I ask our God to bless us all as we now begin together to realize the rich vision and enormous potential of Bellarmine College "in veritatis amore."

Thank you.

Joseph J. McGowan

October 12, 1990

## References

Astin, Alexander W.; Berz, Ellyne R.; and Korn, William S. 1989. *The American Freshman: National Norms for Fall 1989*. Los Angeles: University of California, The Higher Education Research Institute.

The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching 1990. *Campus Life: In Search of Community*. Princeton, N.J.; Princeton University Press.