



ADDRESS TO THE CITY CLUB OF CLEVELAND

Friday, May 25, 2007

Thank you, Len, for your kind introduction.

I am honored to have been invited to speak at the City Club. You are revered nationally for your commitment to free speech.

I am also grateful to the Mandel family for endowing this annual forum on higher education. It culminates a series of recent City Club forums on the topic of higher education – the Chancellor of the Ohio Board of Regents spoke here just three weeks ago. Within the past year, the presidents of Brown University and Duke University also spoke. I am in distinguished company.

A report* published in March by Jobs for the Future, a Boston-based research organization, states that the United States is falling behind other developed nations in the share of its population with a college degree. The report predicts that the gap will widen substantially unless the nation makes postsecondary education much more accessible. This is a challenge for Ohio in particular.

* *"Hitting Home: Quality, Cost, and Access Challenges Confronting Higher Education Today"*

According to the report, if current patterns persist the United States will have 15.6 million fewer bachelor's and associate-degree holders than it will need in 2025 to keep up with its top economic competitors. To avoid this outcome, the nation will need to increase its annual degree production by more than 37%. This means that we must graduate many more students who are members of minority groups, who are from low income families, and who are beyond the traditional college age.

Today, I would like to talk about three aspects of the challenge described in the Jobs for the Future's report: *access, affordability, and accountability*. Access – making it possible for lower-income and other at-risk-students to go to college. Affordability – helping them pay for it. Accountability – providing assurance that colleges and universities are meeting the expectations of society.

Before addressing these questions, it is important that you understand the context of my remarks. I don't profess to speak for all of higher education.

Rather, I speak as the president of a Jesuit, Catholic, private, primarily undergraduate liberal arts university. Because our experience may also reflect the experience of other private colleges and universities in our state, particularly liberal arts institutions, I will refer from time to time to our collective concerns and experiences. Our missions, our contributions to society, and our public policy challenges are similar, although each institution has a unique history and tradition.

Two matters related to the region where we are located also are worth noting:

- Northeast Ohio is an economically stressed region in an economically stressed state; and,

- The demographic trend for tradition-aged, college-bound students in our region is predicted to decline over the next decade.

Because about 70% of John Carroll's students come from this area, economic and demographic trends are strategic concerns for us. Issues of affordability and accessibility have special significance. As a result, John Carroll's recently updated strategic initiatives plan includes a more intensive commitment to improving our region's economy and educational attainment.

Finally, it is important to understand the mission of Jesuit education. Our mission, vision, and core values guide our response to the challenges our region is facing.

John Carroll was founded as St. Ignatius College 121 years ago, in 1886. German-speaking Jesuits came here from Buffalo to educate young men in the discipline of Jesuit, Catholic liberal arts education. Jesuit education began in sixteenth-century Europe under the inspiration and leadership of Ignatius of Loyola.

The university changed its name to John Carroll in 1923, moved to University Heights in 1935, and became fully co-educational in 1968. Until the last four decades, we served primarily a commuting population, and we still serve many "first-generation" college students.

A founding . . . and still operative principle . . . of Jesuit education is that it should prepare one with the knowledge and motivation to be of service to others. Men and women for others has been our motto for nearly 30 years. Education is more than rigorous academic preparation – teaching, learning, and research. As fundamental as these are to our mission, they are not sufficient.

We seek to educate the whole person -- mind, body, and spirit. We call this *cura personalis*. (Latin lives!) The components of liberal arts education are a rigorous core curriculum and challenging courses in the arts and humanities, sciences, and business. Our co-curricular programs engage students in opportunities for leadership, for service, for civic participation, for responding to the call for social justice, and for spiritual growth. Because moral and ethical discernment is needed to promote the greater good, we emphasize that too.

With this context in mind, I move to the challenges of access, affordability, and accountability.

First, affordability. There is a growing perception that increases in college tuition, particularly over the past decade, are making a college education unattainable for low-income families and even for many middle-income families.

Yes, costs have gone up substantially. We understand the concern, and I assure you we are doing everything we can to keep expenses in line. We can discuss the cost issue during the question session if you would like.

I can say without equivocation that any student who is admitted to John Carroll University – that is, any student who meets our admission criteria, regardless of family income -- can afford to enroll. There undoubtedly is sacrifice, but it can be done. And it is being done . . . by many families. The same is true at other private colleges and universities.

The reason this is possible is the partnership that exists among federal, state, and institutional organizations to provide grants, scholarships, and subsidized loans to low- and middle-income families.

According to a recent report by the Department of Labor, three-quarters of undergraduate students at American colleges and universities received some type of financial aid during the 2004-05 academic year;

45% took out loans. The numbers were higher at four-year private institutions: 85% received some type of financial aid, and 60% took out loans. Student debt is a principal factor driving the national conversation about affordability. Federal and state grants, when adjusted for inflation, actually have declined in recent years.

Fortunately, Congress recently raised the Pell Grant maximum and is considering other ways to increase grant aid. Here in Ohio, Governor Strickland and the new General Assembly propose to increase funding for higher education. The drought may be over.

Students who attend private institutions in Ohio receive help from two programs. One is the Ohio College Opportunity Grant Program. It assists students from lower-income families. They can attend any public or private four-year institution in the state.

The other program is the Ohio Student Choice Grant Program. It assists Ohio residents who attend private colleges. Currently, the tuition grant is \$900 a year. The program was established twenty-five years ago to encourage Ohio residents to attend a college in Ohio rather than go to an out-of-state private college. The Governor and General Assembly at the time also recognized that taxpayers save a lot of money when students attend private institutions because it reduces the need to build, equip and operate more public facilities to serve them.

I will return to the topic of the Student Choice Grant in a moment. It is under threat.

The third leg of the financial aid partnership is institutional aid. This frequently is the largest source of financial help for students who attend private colleges and universities.

It may surprise you to hear that the proportion of low- and moderate-income students who attend four-year private colleges and universities in Ohio is about equal to those who attend four-year state institutions. They are able to do so because of the substantial financial aid they receive.

For example, John Carroll provided more than \$30 million in scholarships and grants to our students this year. Financial aid is the second largest item in our budget. Other private schools spend, proportionate to their size, similar amounts. (Note the presence of Dr. Andrew Roth, president of Notre Dame College, who could tell a similar story.)

Earlier this year, we announced a new financial aid initiative to reach out to more low and moderate income families. We are offering to pay almost all of the tuition, room and board of Ohio students whose annual family income is less than \$40,000. The university will cover all but \$3,500 per year in tuition; students will pay the remaining amount using federal and state grants and loans. The University's commitment to each eligible student will be approximately \$80,000 over four years.

Students receiving these grants must meet all of the university's academic standards for admission. They must perform at least 30 hours of community service each year, which manifests our commitment to service. We expect that this initiative will enable us to enroll students who otherwise would not be able to join the John Carroll community.

Before moving on to the topic of access, I would like to return for a moment to the Student Choice Grant Program. Governor Strickland has proposed to cut \$35 million from the program's annual budget and to establish a family-means test. Essentially, it would convert the program from an entitlement based on Ohio residency to one that is need-based. Ohio already has a need-based program -- Ohio College Opportunity Grants.

More than 45,000 Ohio residents would lose Choice Grants under the Governor's proposal. This would exclude 14,000 students here in Northeast Ohio, including 1,900 John Carroll students. The economic

impact on Northeast Ohio would be a loss of \$11 million. We oppose the Governor's proposal because of its effect on our students, their families, and our region.

The Student Choice Program has a very successful track record. When the program became fully operational in 1987, 32,000 Ohio residents received Choice Grants. Today there are 58,000 recipients. That's a 76% growth rate in a state whose population has remained relatively flat over the past 20 years. Why jeopardize success?

We disagree with the proposal for another reason – equity. Ohio does not have a means test for subsidies that support students who attend public institutions. Nor should it have such a policy.

What then is the rationale for means-testing students who attend private institutions? Their parents pay taxes that support higher education. Shouldn't they get some benefit?

It is not a situation where private institutions mostly serve students from affluent families. Numerically, in fact, more higher-income families send their sons and daughters to Ohio's flagship public institutions.

We are now engaged in a statewide campaign to convince the General Assembly and the Governor to keep the Student Choice Program intact. The Ohio House has proposed to restore about \$20 million of funding. The budget bill now is in the Senate. We are appealing to the Senate to remove the means test and to restore full funding -- to \$53 million. We would welcome your support!

I would like to move to the second challenge, and a greater challenge in my judgment – that of providing access to college to students who are being left behind today.

Let's look at Ohio. We rank 39th in the nation in the percentage of adults with a bachelor's degree – just 21%. Only one-third of 18 to 24 year-olds in Ohio attend college. I won't discourage you with other statistics.

The hurdles we must overcome are formidable. They include:

- poor preparation in critical disciplines such as reading, writing, math and the sciences;
- lack of awareness that college is a realistic possibility;
- stifled aspirations due to poor mentoring and guidance;
- lack of knowledge of how, and when, and where to apply to college;
- the application and financial aid process itself, which can intimidate even well-educated parents and students; and,
- where to turn for help after entering college when the inevitable rough patches occur – be they academic, social, financial, or health-related.

We can do more to address these problems. We must do more if our state is to have a prosperous future. What more can we do to motivate at-risk-students to dream, to aspire, to succeed? It will require intervention and support at many levels. It also will require more financial resources and better coordination in the use of those resources.

I am not here today to recommend a comprehensive strategy for improving access to college, but I will provide a few examples of things that we are doing. Other colleges and universities are similarly engaged.

Working for systemic change is at the foundation of our commitment to improving access. For example, John Carroll participates in a number of partnerships and initiatives to improve the quality of K-12 education here in Northeastern Ohio and throughout the state:

- One is the Ohio Reading First Center for Professional Development, a collaborative project with Cleveland State University and Akron University. The Center's mission is to provide professional development in sound teaching practices to teachers and principals.
- We also participate in three initiatives to improve the quality of K-12 science and math education in Northeast Ohio. Our partners include the Cleveland Municipal School District and other school districts, Cleveland State University, and Case Western Reserve University.
- And, close to home, we have a very successful academic partnership with the Cleveland Heights / University Heights School District. It includes intensive collaboration between our education department -- faculty and education majors -- and teachers at the Gearity Professional Development School.

Beyond systemic change, John Carroll supports a variety of tutoring and other service-learning programs that are designed to motivate K-12 students to remain in school and prepare for college. One example is a partnership with La Sagrada Familia Parish on Cleveland's west side. It is called Project QUE (Question, Understand, Explain). Its mission is to stimulate an interest in college among Hispanic children at the middle-school level through a series of educational and cultural experiences.

I wish I had time to provide other examples, but time does not permit.

Earlier, I noted that Ohio's four-year private colleges and universities . . . proportionate to our share of total enrollment . . . educate about the same percentage of students at the lower levels of family income as do public institutions. This achievement is matched by our commitment to diversity, another measure of accessibility.

Private colleges and universities in Ohio educate one-third of the undergraduate students who attend four-year institutions in our state. We work hard to attract and retain minority students. How many of you know that 30% of African-American students enrolled at four-year institutions in Ohio are enrolled at private schools? They achieve a 38% share of total bachelor degrees awarded to African-American students in the state. The figures for Hispanic-American students are similar: 33% of those attending four-year institutions are enrolled at private schools; they are awarded 38% of the total bachelor degrees conferred on Hispanic-Americans.

I now turn to the third challenge -- accountability. We hear statements today that colleges and universities should be more accountable to students, parents, and other constituents.

First, what does accountability mean? A colleague at another Jesuit college has defined it well: "Accountability is achieved when an institution can assure all of its constituencies that it is meeting stated goals and fulfilling its promises."

It seems to me that we in higher education are accountable to just about everyone -- current and prospective students and their families, faculty and staff, alumni, boards of directors, benefactors, accrediting bodies, higher education associations, federal agencies, the Board of Regents, state and local agencies . . . the list goes on. As you can imagine, these diverse groups do not always agree on what is expected of us. It makes management a complex task.

One of the great strengths in American higher education is that it is made up of a wide variety of institutions. We have highly diverse missions, philosophies of education, goals, interests, programs, and

constituents. There are public and private and for-profit institutions; research universities; liberal arts colleges; community colleges; faith-based institutions; bible colleges; art and music institutes . . . again, the list goes on.

How does one establish uniform standards of accountability for such diverse institutions? How would that work?

Leading the current campaign to make higher education more accountable is the U.S. Secretary of Education, Dr. Margaret Spellings. Specifically, the Secretary proposes to establish federal standards of performance regarding student achievement and to gain control over non-governmental bodies that review and accredit educational institutions. She is trying to accomplish this by regulatory means.

The proposed regulations, if adopted, would drive education toward a one-size fits-all model of academic quality that emphasizes rigid indicators of academic performance. All institutions would be required to have performance indicators that are accepted by their accrediting agencies. Accrediting agencies, in turn, would be subservient to the federal government.

Do we as a nation want the U.S. Department of Education setting goals and performance standards for higher education? There are ample and effective vehicles for assessment and accreditation already in place. A federal straightjacket will not enhance their efficacy. If you have questions about this matter, I would be pleased to respond during the question period.

There are many ways to hold higher education accountable. In concluding my remarks about accountability, I would like to provide some data that document the contribution that private colleges and universities make to Ohio's educational and economic prosperity.

I mentioned before that private colleges and universities enroll one-third of undergraduate students enrolled at four-year institutions in Ohio. This represents a major contribution to the state's economy and quality of life.

Private colleges and universities in Ohio confer an even higher share of all bachelor degrees awarded in the state -- 35% of the total. And, with respect to degrees conferred in STEM disciplines . . . which are vital to spurring economic growth in our state . . . private colleges and universities do even better. For example, we confer a 54% share of all bachelor's degrees awarded in physics, and between 40% and 50% of degrees awarded in mathematics, biological sciences, computer science, and chemistry.

We believe these measures of performance, and there are myriad others, are compelling examples of accountability to our constituents and to society. I hope they help make the case that we do not need the federal government to govern our academic programs.

Conversely, we do need the State of Ohio to continue as an active partner in financial aid assistance through the Ohio Student Choice Program.

I would like to conclude by returning briefly to the topic of service as a principle of education. In the lobby, as you depart, you will find a copy of our university magazine. It includes a feature section on service, service learning, and social justice initiatives as exemplified by our alumni, students, and other members of the John Carroll community. I invite you to take a copy.

The magazine also includes an article titled "Making College Affordable," which describes the financial aid initiative I described earlier.

I thank you very much for your attention and interest.