

Lorraine Cuddeback: Dean's List Luncheon Address, April 6, 2008

Good afternoon administrators, faculty members, parents, students, and invited guests. My name is Lorraine Cuddeback, and I am a senior here at Loyola, with an interdisciplinary major in Theology and Writing. I would like to start by congratulating everyone here: students, for your hard work and achievement, parents for the many years of supporting and nurturing your successful children, and the faculty and administration for creating an environment where so many students can have such a fruitful intellectual life. I am honored and humbled by the opportunity to address such a group of men and women.

This past Easter, while I was home, my younger sister Helene received her final few college acceptances. Seeing my sister go through the college application process has made me somewhat nostalgic. To watch her make decisions that will shape her life for the next four years reminds me of how I did that not very long ago, and of how my choice to attend Loyola College has shaped the person I am now, and the future I am facing after graduation in May.

I wish I could say that I knew all about Jesuit education and Loyola's Undergraduate Educational Aims when I decided to come here, but the truth is that I knew of only one: intellectual excellence. I ultimately chose Loyola because I knew that of all the colleges I applied to it could provide the greatest academic challenge. Yet, I have found that the intellectual excellence of Loyola requires the rest of the Educational Aims: critical understanding, eloquentia perfecta, aesthetics, faith and mission, the promotion of justice, diversity, and wellness. These values are all woven together to

create an environment that truly stimulates and nurtures the mind, body, and spirit here at Loyola.

From the first day of classes freshman year, my class work was different than I had ever experienced in high school. Instead of regurgitating information, I was asked to start thinking independently. Multiple choice and fill-in-the-blank tests virtually disappeared; I was writing more than I ever had previously. My college-level writing classes are the best example of this, and in turn, of *eloquentia perfecta*.

Eloquentia perfecta is described as the ability to use words effectively, elegantly, and to competently communicate our ideas and thoughts to others through the written word. Where I had once written my papers in a single night, to be turned in for grading the next day, now I was forced to draft, workshop, and draft again. And then, I was asked to reflect on those drafts and workshops. Essentially, my writing courses at Loyola shifted my focus from the end product, to the *process* of education. I had to stop memorizing, and begin analyzing.

Sophomore year, I took a class titled Writing Center Theory and Practice, with Dr. Cinthia Gannett, the director of Loyola's Writing Center. This was the first class where I heard words like pedagogy and discourse. Pedagogy, I learned, was the art of teaching, pointing to the philosophy of a classroom, whereas discourses were the communities which teach us how to speak, and how to write. These topics encouraged me to look at how we speak and write in a critical way; it encourages *critical understanding* of our language.

It was also this class that made me aware of the educational problems in Baltimore. Furthermore this class dared to suggest that Baltimore's low literacy rate was

not from a lack of funding, or bad teachers, or even a poor work ethic on behalf of the students, but rather resulted from a flaw in the pedagogy. For me, this was a radical idea, and one which I wanted to investigate further. It would also bring me to a true understanding of exactly what education for the whole person meant.

So, although my interest in writing started with the search for *eloquentia perfecta*, it brought me to a *critical understanding* of literacy. This, in turn, pushed me to realize that Education is the key to the *promotion of justice*. Not long after I took the Dr. Gannett's class, I applied for, and was accepted into, the SumServe program offered through Loyola's Center for Community Service and Justice. SumServe placed me in a full-time position at a non-profit agency in Baltimore for the summer, along with weekly seminars which discussed issues of inequality and injustice.

I ended up placed with The Learning Bank of C.O.I.L., Inc.: a literacy center in West Baltimore offering classes to adults seeking a GED. There was a real dichotomy present in my experience at The Learning Bank. I knew I was exactly where I needed to be; from the moment I walked into the building, I knew I wanted to work there. At the same time, I felt the discomfort of an outsider. There was no denying how different I was from the learners in culture, in values, even, to some degree, in the way we used language. I was afraid the Learners I worked with would resent my privileged education; I was, after all, attending a college which cost more per year than many of them made in wages. But I underestimated them. When I, often embarrassed, told Learners that I was in school, at Loyola, they would congratulate me without a single hint of bitterness. "It's good to get a degree," they told me, "You need to be an educated person."

As the summer continued on, I became more and more emotionally involved with the learners, and in many ways began to forget our differences. I was seeing the theories I had discussed in class about pedagogy and discourse come alive. The connection between theory and practice had never been so clear to me. More than anything, I wanted to bring my experience at The Learning Bank that summer back to Loyola. But I was unsure of how to bridge the gap between two very different communities.

I turned to back to *eloquentia perfecta*. With support from Dr. Gannett, I developed a plan for what would later become *Prometheus's Torch*, a collection of writings by the men and women of The Learning Bank. Published with the help of CCSJ and Loyola's own student-run publishing company, Apprentice House, *Prometheus's Torch* would be my way of bringing the stories of the Learners, in their words and writing, to Loyola's campus. I was able to return to The Learning Bank last summer, and immerse myself in the words, spoken and written, of the Learners. Slowly, the book took shape, giving a voice, and an unprecedented opportunity to men and women who had long been ignored. As the Learners developed their own *eloquentia perfecta*, justice was enacted: the Learners' own words would educate the world about their experiences. *Prometheus's Torch* became a synthesis of many of the Educational Aims that Loyola values; it was also an amazing opportunity to collaborate with the Baltimore community.

Yet, it is not the only opportunity Loyola offers. That's the true beauty of the Undergraduate Educational Aims: they can be tailored to fit any individual, to help him or her grow as a student and as a person. Now, as I stand on the brink of graduation, I am choosing to enter a volunteer service; however, I have close friends who are turning their

intellectual passions into many diverse forms of service, going for degrees in law, in medicine, in higher education, in social work, and more. Each and every student here, regardless of grade level or major, has a passion for learning; that passion has the power to transform our world. To adapt a quote: where your greatest joy – be it math, biology, economics, marketing, communications, or anything else – where that joy can meet the world's needs is where Loyola students have the power to take our education and make it something more. That is what makes Loyola's education different – what makes it an education of excellence.

Thank you very much, and enjoy the rest of the afternoon.