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Dean's Address to the Graduate Faculty State of the Laney Graduate School

Lisa A. Tedesco
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Welcome to this year's Dean's Address to the graduate faculty. It is a privilege to stand here again.

This is my fifth Dean's Address. It coincides with an external review of the Laney Graduate School, a practice the Provost engages for the academic units across the University, at each five year mark. I am sure many of you contributed to that review, and I am looking forward to insights, guidance and recommendations for going forward. I thank you for your contributions and for meeting with the distinguished panel of reviewers.

An external review is always a Janus-like occasion to pause and reflect, to simultaneously look back at what has happened during the review period and look forward to the next several years. My remarks today will be offered in that spirit: taking stock of important changes, and presenting challenges around how we build our future.

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I want to start by placing my remarks in one additional context, and that is the context of national service in two important groups representing the full agenda of graduate education. Last year I was elected to the Board of the Council of Graduate Schools and this year I became the chair-elect of the CGS Board. Also last year, I was selected to serve on the Executive Committee of the Association of Graduate Schools, the graduate deans group of the AAU. This service gives additional breadth and depth to my passion and commitment to advancing graduate education, and it places Emory and the Laney Graduate School in the capacity building discussions nationally and internationally. There is no better way to deliver the message that graduate education is crucial to the research university and to American competitiveness than through CGS and AGS/AAU, and I take this work on with humility and with pride for Emory.

A week ago today, I was in Washington DC, in my capacity as Chair Elect of the CGS Board. I was there as part of a group of leaders in graduate education who met with elected officials and executive leadership from the private sector to continue a discussion on the future of graduate education that began last year about this time.

The discussion followed up on a report issued by the Council of Graduate Schools entitled *The Path Forward: the Future of Graduate Education in the United States*. The report was produced by a blue-ribbon commission charged with examining the political, demographic, socioeconomic, educational, and financial trends driving participation in graduate education. Findings and recommendations were provided widely to universities, industry, and policymakers. The report created an ongoing and sustained national conversation on how important, how essential it is to increase graduate degree attainment by all segments of the country's population so that we can, as a nation remain competitive.

Last week, I was part of a panel that discussed the report's impact, and joined in meetings with Georgia's congressional delegation and other policymakers. It is one of the most important documents of its kind produced in the last decade or so, and well worth reading.

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The report, as well as this year's follow up event, looked at both opportunities and areas of vulnerability.

The most fundamental opportunity is the need for a highly educated workforce. The report found that in the United States, the number of jobs that require a graduate degree is estimated to grow by 2.5 million by 2018, including an expected 17 percent increase in those requiring a doctorate and 18 percent in those requiring a master's degree. Those significant numbers indicate that graduate education continues to fill vital needs for our culture, society and economy. In the big picture, graduate education is a vital public good.

The report discusses vulnerabilities affecting graduate education and recommends how three important spheres – universities, the private sector, and policymakers – can address them. Of course, funding is an important area of vulnerability, and recent developments make this area loom larger. Funding for many agencies that support research in a variety of areas is in danger of being cut, and a new proposal on the table might eliminate the in-school interest subsidy for graduate students on subsidized loans. That is, these loans would accrue interest while students are enrolled in their degree programs.

In the current political and economic circumstances, graduate education must compete with and in some cases against many other pressing public goods. Unfortunately, current proposals for spending reductions include projected support for research and graduate education that take us backward. It will take more than a decade to recover from the impact these reductions may have on the pipeline for students and for research funding. Preparation of students for doctoral level and master's study, and for study in the professions for that matter, is not something that can stop and start again overnight.

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The report and my recent meetings in Washington are not far removed from the day-to-day lives of graduate faculty and students. A number of our recent activities and initiatives are closely related to strategies recommended by the report and pursued by leaders in graduate education at many universities.

- We are working hard to place graduate education at the center of Emory’s institutional development and planning. One sign of our success is our new name. We are now working on development initiatives that build on this legacy by creating endowed fellowships and a Laney Symposium program. Katie Busch, our Senior Director of Development is an extraordinary partner in these activities. Because of her work, Development and Alumni Relations appointed a dedicated assistant to her for the Laney Graduate School, and in February, we welcomed Robin Harpak to our offices.
- We are working hard to show that we deliver what we promise. Completion rates, completion times, and placement are important, because when we seek broader support for graduate education we must be able to demonstrate that we are capable stewards of the resources we control. This is one reason we are striving to create more and better information about the progress of our students and the careers of our graduates after they get their degrees. Planning sessions with programs are more informed and grounded with information that can show how programs develop year to year. And with your help, we are starting to build records of how our students fare when they leave us.
- We are acting on a vision that sees graduate education as connected not just with universities and teaching, but as a vital source of highly educated professionals across higher education, government, non-profit institutions, and the private sector. We are supporting and introducing more programs to help our students build professional credentials and skills. These programs include our Professional Development Support funds, that move students towards a grant based environment; our Grant Writing Program, which is branching out to offer more sessions for students in the NSF and NIH funded areas; our Pathways Beyond the Professoriate series and Alumni Mentoring program, which connect our students with alumni who can offer insight and networking for career paths.

More broadly, the priorities that have helped us organize our work over the last several years are a good fit with the recommendations of The Path Forward.

- *We seek to grow with excellence:* to sustain and build on Emory’s strengths and provide graduate education in areas where we can contribute in ways that add distinction and value.
- *We seek to develop funding:* to engage partners at Emory and beyond in collaborative efforts that are tied to the value and contributions of graduate students and graduate training.
- *We seek to encourage the study of complex problems:* to engage study that crosses disciplinary boundaries and has an impact not just on research and scholarship but on the public good.
- *We seek to support student professionalism:* to train intellectual leaders who can engage with a multitude of problems, collaborators and audiences.

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We must be prepared to situate graduate education as something which is not only a matter of individual betterment or esoteric pursuits of knowledge, but also as a public, global good which needs to be nurtured and supported for the broad benefit of our culture and society.

In the next few days, I will be sending you by email a link to the [Path Forward](#) report, along with information about a [new initiative](#) started by AAU and the AGS deans, designed to highlight the ways in which research in the context of graduate education benefits society. It is a clever tabloid that makes the results of research extremely easy to understand in terms of importance, impact and usefulness. The public, policymakers, and politicians are the audiences. I will be asking you to help Emory contribute information to this important project and to one that is similarly emerging for the humanities.

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To build our future – to enable us to grow with excellence, to seize opportunities and guard against some of the challenges ahead – we in the Laney Graduate School have worked hard over the last year or so to reorient our organization and capacities, in particular around three areas: academic affairs and student programs, planning, and service.

I want to take a moment to tell you about some of those changes.

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In the area of academic affairs and student programs, we are reconfiguring one of our associate dean positions. Mark Risjord received a Fulbright and is leaving to spend next academic year at Karlov University in the Czech Republic. Mark has been tremendously important in the Laney Graduate School, serving ably in connection with many projects, and being a wise source of counsel to me and the graduate school staff. I hope you will join me in thanking Mark, and in congratulating him on his leave and his Fulbright fellowship. We look forward to reconnecting with Mark when he returns. We applaud you, Mark.

Our next associate dean will step into a realigned position, as a full-time Senior Associate Dean, who will assume Mark's responsibilities as well as some others. In due course, we will tell you more about how this change will connect your work with us and serve our work on your behalf.

I am very pleased to note that Carey Drews-Botsch will stay with us as Associate Dean, leading evaluation, institutional research and the analyses that shape our understanding of program quality and program needs.

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Recognizing that thoughtful and sustained planning is essential, indeed crucial, to our programmatic health and competitive edge, I have asked Rosemary Hynes to step into a new role as Assistant Dean for Program Planning and Strategic Initiatives. In many ways, this is consistent with what Rosemary has done for a long time, contributing at the highest levels to what LGS does to ensure program strength and provide resources. Her role in this area has been juggled with many other duties and responsibilities. In our new organization, she will be less involved in operations and finance, and

will be able to devote the majority of her expertise and efforts to the crucial tasks of serving as the liaison to programs and in planning for the future.

Rosemary is and will be busy. Let me mention several planning projects that are already under way, or will be started soon.

Late last fall I received the report of a committee I appointed to advise on the **Growth and Sustainability of the Graduate Division of Biological and Biomedical Sciences**. As part of this year's budget cycle, I've been in conversation with Provost Lewis on the report's recommendations. The conversations with the Provost continue, and the need remains to identify funding to phase in student growth and to provide for a budget to sustain additional support for students. Over the next few weeks I am meeting with dean colleagues and will then share the report with GDBBS program leaders and with the relevant department chairs. Principles for growth and long-term commitments for funding will be shaped from additional discussions.

Our **Languages and Literatures Advisory Committee**, convened last year to consider how we sustain and advance the strengths we have in languages and literatures, will soon submit its report. We expect the committee to propose ideas on a variety of scales, and look forward to engaging with partners to examine their viability and how they might be implemented.

Stipend Support Enhancement is a need we knew we had before the current admission's cycle began. Comments from a number of program leaders involved in this year's recruitment and admission process have emphasized it. We are on the verge of falling behind in our basic terms of student support. To continue to compete for the best students – to be the first choice school – we must improve the support we offer. We must ensure that the health insurance subsidy will remain at 100%. We must move students on 9 months of support to 12 months. We must build budgets for stipend increases in the future.

We know that there is yet more to do. We continue to review a steady stream of proposals for new programs. We know from conversations with many of you that you nurture ideas and ambitions for new, interesting, and innovative programs and partnerships. We know that there are many more faculty who want to mentor and teach graduate students in a number of areas of the university. It is well time for us to figure out how to respond to the growing faculty capacity for graduate education, so that we can reach into the mature top of the AAU ranks as a research university. A large part of Rosemary's leadership will be dedicated to working with you to move from potentials and plans to priorities and sustainable, coordinated, and where possible, collaborative initiatives.

As a result of this change, José Rodriguez will become Director of Finance and Budgeting. He will shoulder Rosemary's tasks in the finance area and provide budgetary analyses crucial to our decision-making all along the way.

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In the third area of change, Ulf Nilsson will become Assistant Dean of Operations, providing oversight of the many services and operations our staff provides. The services and operations we provide are essential to your work, because when we perform with intelligence, efficiency, and dedication, we free you to do what you do best – build and sustain the vibrant intellectual

community of the LGS, and train a new generation of scholars, researchers and intellectual leaders. The operations area will bring together and coordinate staff in communications, enrollment and records processes, and information systems.

These changes will enable one more change: Kharen Fulton will gradually move away from managing the processes of application and enrollment, and focus more on the recruitment of new students. As this realignment progresses, Kharen will increasingly work with you on innovative approaches for reaching out to potential applicants and on enhanced strategies to be the 'first choice' school for a wider range of programs. Kharen will be working to help us better reach prospective graduate student in minority and underrepresented groups, and she will help us pick up the pace for attracting the growing populations of Hispanic, Latina/o, and Chicana/o students in the southeast. Overall, we want to provide programs with support for active and proactive, rather than passive, recruitment strategies.

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Our goal with these changes is to turn the notion of 'service' into real, palpable capacity building. In fact, it is time for all of us to leave the flat notion of 'service' behind and see administrative work as disciplined decision-making and capacity building. We all want our graduates to be super competitors on the academic job market and the job markets beyond the academy. With this realignment we re-dedicate ourselves to the purpose and discipline of supporting your work and the LGS priorities for graduate education.

As with any realignment, there is a period of transition and uncertainty, as all of us grow into new roles and work to provide help and guidance to those who are stepping into new positions and responsibilities. We will keep you informed, and will trust your patience and good advice.

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One reason for these changes is our realization that the LGS is quickly becoming a more complex and very, very busy place. Looking back over the last five years, we have, among other things:

- developed metrics and systematic annual reviews for annual planning with programs to ensure excellence and sustainable cohort sizes;
- were named in honor of President James T. Laney, acknowledging both the historic and future importance and value of graduate education for our stature as a great research university;
- increased stipend support and achieved 100 percent healthcare coverage for all eligible graduate students;
- created an alumni, development and fundraising environment and established an infrastructure for philanthropy;
- created new opportunities for interdisciplinary scholarship through the New Thinkers New Leaders Fund;
- worked with faculty to design and implement new interdisciplinary programs at the doctoral, masters, and certificate levels (doctoral programs in Computer Science and Informatics, Cancer Biology, Environmental Health Sciences; masters programs in Computer Science, Development Practice, and Bioethics; certificate programs in Translational Research, Mind,

- designed and implemented professional development support funds to provide resources for student travel to present their research, conduct research, or acquire additional skills for dissertation work;
- expanded the grant writing workshops and preparation workshops for competitive extramural awards and intramural sixth year fellowships; and
- launched the project on scholarly integrity and responsible conduct of research to enhance student training and comply with national regulations.

I would like to take a moment to acknowledge and pay tribute to the people who make this work possible. The staff of the Laney Graduate School has worked very hard over the last several years, and I wish to salute their perseverance, creativity, and drive in the face of a great deal of change – some of it, surely, is change that we initiated together and some of it is change that was brought upon us from presses beyond the Laney Graduate School.

This tribute also goes to many of you, treasured graduate faculty members, who have been involved as DGSs or in other capacities at the forefront of these initiatives and changes, and to the equally treasured graduate program administrators in your programs. I want to extend special thanks to three members of the Executive Council who reach the end of their terms this spring – Leslie Harris, Rebecca Stone, and Yoland Smith.

On behalf of the Laney Graduate School, I express our deepest appreciation to all of you, for everything you do to make graduate education at Emory the distinctive and extraordinary project that it is. You make Emory’s star shine brighter through your research, scholarship, teaching and mentoring. Between and among the up and down and back and forth of all this work, it is my great passion and good fortune to work with you on accomplishing extraordinary things together.

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I’d like to end this year’s address by taking a moment to focus on one of our key accomplishments, and then pose two questions.

I am sure you recall the changes to the structuring of the financial support for graduate education. Most of those measures were actually approved in 2003, but their implementation took shape during the 2007-08 academic year. These changes were a big, difficult, and absolutely essential step for the long term future of graduate education at Emory. As it turned out, they were also essential to the short term. Had they not been partially implemented before the economic downturn that happened in the fall of 2008, the consequences of that downturn would have been not just traumatic, but most probably devastating.

With these new funding structures in place, we are in a position where a “steady state” is sustainable into the indefinite future. That is a change. It is an achievement. As difficult and sometimes as unwelcome as it was, I am – we in the Laney Graduate School are – proud of it.

But a steady state is not where we want to be. To stand still is to fall behind, and you and we have ambitions to grow and develop. This development and change will require strategic choices that are

difficult to make. We cannot expect to continue doing all that we are doing, AND add more. We must be prepared to look with clear eyes at what we are doing and decide to leave some things behind in order to chart new paths.

In that vein, I raise two questions. The first one is:

What will we not do?

I mean that question in two senses. First, what kinds of changes are off the table? Recall our response to 2008. We decided that we would not change the level of student support we offer, and we decided that we would not make reductions in an “across the board” way. Taking some things off the table forced us to focus on the options that remained. We need to think the same way about our future. What kinds of changes will we NOT consider making? What possible changes are then left on the table?

The second sense is this. Out of all the things we do now, which ones should we disengage from? We do seek to grow with excellence; we do seek to capitalize on capacities, ambitions, ideas, plans, opportunities and more. But we cannot only add to what we already do, and we cannot restrict strategic and clear-eyed assessments to new programs and ventures. We have to ask ourselves: what are we now doing that we should disengage from?

This is a very tough question, perhaps especially for faculty. Let me tell you a brief story about that. You may recall the advisory committee that worked with us for a little over a year to help us with program planning processes. We are very grateful for their work, and benefited a great deal from their engagement.

As a collective experiment, we gave them the program planning data we had at the time, and asked them to apportion stipend lines, anonymously, in ways they believed reflected excellence and good planning for the future. This was a hypothetical exercise, designed to help us create a provocative and frank exchange from which we could all learn.

One result surprised us. **No one proposed reductions in any program.** Even under the cloak of anonymity and in the context of a hypothetical exercise, no proposals took significant steps to disengage from some programs that did not look good in the data in order to build programs that did look good. We did still have an excellent discussion that uncovered multiple ways the data could be interpreted and contextualized, and heightened our appreciation for the varied implications of our planning discussions and decisions.

I tell the story to raise my second question:

How will you help us decide where and how to disengage?

If we are to grow and develop, we must make complex and difficult choices. We must and will look to you, the graduate faculty, for help in making those decisions. We do not wish to make them in a vacuum, and it does not mean help by saying “yay” and “nay” to this or that. Above all we need help with reimagining and reinventing the way you and we spend the considerable efforts we devote to graduate education.

We will look to you for advice, guidance, and leadership. We will of course always work through our faculty governance process, but we will be looking to you for more and different kinds of participation.

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I leave you today with one report, and two questions. I am pleased to report that state of our graduate school is strong and steady, and our future is more secure than it was five years ago. We have ambitions to grow and change in ways that build on Emory's commitments and strengths. To help us do so, I ask that you work with me to confront two difficult questions. What will we not do? How will you help us disengage from some things to make room for new engagements?

Thank you for listening.