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

*Lisa A. Tedesco
April 9, 2019*

Good afternoon, and welcome to the Dean's address for the 2018-19 academic year. It is my privilege to once again update you on the state of the Laney Graduate School, and on our priorities and plans going forward.

It feels extra auspicious this year. We started the year with the wonderful news of Emory's significant investment in graduate education, specifically in the area of stipend support. We are ending the year, in just a few weeks, with our centennial commencement, marking 100 years since Emory's graduate school awarded its first degree. Those are two great bookends to a very busy year!

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Before I present my remarks, I would like to take a few moments to offer my sincerest appreciation to the Laney Graduate School Executive Council, the elected graduate faculty governing body, for their outstanding work this year. I am very grateful for the Council's thoughtfulness in addressing each and every item that comes before it, including initiatives that originate from LGS leadership. I'll speak more about that in a few minutes, but right now, I want to thank this year's Council members:

- Carla Berg from Behavioral Sciences and Health Education,
- Council chair Larry Boise from the Graduate Division of Biological and Biomedical Sciences,
- Patricia Brennan from Psychology,
- Judith Evans Grubbs from History,
- Penelope Howards from Epidemiology,
- Ellen Idler from Sociology,
- Roxani Margariti from Islamic Civilizations Studies,

- Andrew Mitchell from Philosophy, and
- Malu Tansey from the Graduate Division of Biological and Biomedical Sciences.

Your generous service and outstanding leadership are much appreciated.

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As we [announced in October](#), Emory has made a strategic investment in graduate education which will, effective Fall 2019, raise our minimum stipend level to \$31,000. Needless to say, that was wonderful news, and it was a privilege to start the academic year on such a positive note.

I want to take a moment to reflect on how this enhanced support for doctoral education affirms Emory's commitment to academic eminence. First, this investment is emblematic of what a comprehensive research university does when it values doctoral education across the breadth of our areas. A comprehensive research university needs excellent and prominent doctoral education, and it needs it not as islands or peaks in select areas, but broadly across academic fields.

This investment is also a strong vote of confidence in graduate education at Emory: in you, the graduate faculty; in your students, present and future; and in LGS, as the vehicle that brings together doctoral training across the many departments, schools, and units that together make up our "[One Emory](#)."

Finally, this investment is part of a strategic vision for Emory developed by President Sterk and Provost McBride that is "decidedly committed to academic, research, and scholarly eminence at every level" ([Provost McBride](#)). LGS welcomes that bold, unabashed commitment to academic eminence, and is proud to carry forward the challenge it contains. The vision this investment represents honors well the vision and investment brought to Emory by our namesake, President James T. Laney, over four decades ago.

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With great funding comes great responsibility. On one level, our responsibility is simple: bring in the very best graduate students to study with the very best faculty. At the center of everything we do is the nexus between talented, diverse, and committed graduate students and productive, visible, and excellent faculty mentors.

How do we recruit the best students? We know that it requires a proactive effort. We can't rest on reputation and wait for them to simply find us. It needs planning, engagement, and activity, to be present in the spaces where prospective applicants can be found, and to put forward the case for taking a close look at Emory as the place to do their graduate training. We in LGS are engaged in that effort more than ever – attending graduate fairs, using our recruiting and admissions platforms, and joining networks for recruiting.

At the center of recruiting are you, the graduate faculty. We know from surveys and student feedback that faculty are one of the major reasons students choose Emory, and that faculty members are one of the most influential sources of information for prospective students. We are working to help you be engaged, to actively search out and recruit the best students to choose

Emory by providing resources and information, but in the end there is no substitute for your engagement. We are asking you to make the mindset of competitive proactive recruiting part of your professional culture: when you are in professional contexts where potential applicants may be present, we ask you to engage and reach out to help build future cohorts.

As you know, we are committed to keeping ourselves accountable around our recruiting efforts. We are gathering more information about the recruiting process from admitted applicants, and we will examine that data to guide our efforts. We are also tracking how we compete with our peers, and that information – the quality of the schools we compete against and how we fare in that competition – will be an important metric to track our progress.

We are also committed to ensuring that our students align with the faculty who are leading researchers in their fields. We have asked all of you how this process of students aligning with faculty happens in your programs, and we look forward to continuing those discussions, in program planning sessions and in other contexts. Our goal is straightforward: to see students work with faculty who are prominent, productive researchers in their fields. We serve our students best, we serve you best, and we serve Emory best, if we ensure that the graduate students who choose Emory are trained by graduate faculty who are leaders in their fields. We seek to advance Emory as the university of first choice.

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Students come here to be trained by the graduate faculty, but we in LGS – collaborating with faculty and staff across Emory – have important roles to play in supporting students on their paths. In broad terms, we provide support in three areas: mentoring, student well-being, and professional development.

In the area of mentoring, we are collaborating with University offices to promote and develop mentor training to best guide and support a new generation of students. We invited Dr. Becky Packard to conduct several sessions around mentoring, both with faculty and with students, we have developed programming to help mentors recognize and support students in distress, and we are currently working with the Center for Faculty Excellence and Development to better train faculty to deal with harassment and abuse on campus and bystander issues. Dr. Ambika Mathur, the new vice provost for graduate studies and dean of the graduate school at UT-San Antonio, came in the Fall to discuss her work on professional development for graduate students, reformulating the outcomes and efforts of the NIH BEST program. We are also collaborating with our program administrators to develop standardized training for graduate program staff so they can best serve students in ways consistent with policies and best practices, and we will host a retreat to provide training this summer.

We are committed to more deliberately working with you toward curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment that is contemporary and more in line with what students expect today because of their undergraduate preparation and because of how they are thinking about their working futures.

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As I am sure all of you agree, student well-being is an important concern. We are as committed as ever to providing strong support systems for graduate students. We are working directly with the

CAPS clinical staff, with the Student Success Program, as well as with Student Intervention Services to support students in all levels and types of need, from food and housing insecurities to mental and physical health needs. Assistant Dean for Student Affairs Mary Horton is part of a University committee to help identify the most effective means of tracking students who need additional support, and is working with University response teams to most efficiently and effectively respond to students, and to faculty, who often are the first to identify a problem.

There are quite a few resources for graduate students' self-care and wellness on our campus, and a part of our work is making sure that students are aware of and use them. Last week, which was Graduate Student Appreciation Week, we partnered with Recreation and Wellness to introduce students to a variety of activities offered by the Woodruff Physical Education Center, free of charge to LGS students, including yoga, Zumba, and cycling. We also partnered with the Center for Contemplative Science and Compassion-Based Ethics to offer a guided meditation session by one of their certified practitioners. Thus, the week offered students an introduction to a range of campus activities designed to help with stress management.

More broadly, we are working to improve our connections and communications with Campus Life and University services offices so that these offices can best understand, recognize, and serve LGS students. We look forward to the arrival of the new Vice President and Dean of Campus Life, Enku Gelaye, from University of Massachusetts Amherst where she was the Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs and Campus Life. We are confident that Campus Life will continue a One Emory approach to ensure that all students have access to and are served by important Campus Life resources. We are also looking toward new developments on space and housing for graduate students – LGS is engaged in the master planning process for the University, and our priorities include graduate student commons space and graduate student housing.

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In the area of professional development and career counseling, we look forward to hiring a new assistant dean to lead our work in the area – campus visits are scheduled in the coming weeks. Our programming has continued apace, and many graduate students have taken advantage of new programs. Ariela Freedman's workshops using Gallup's Clifton Strengths Finder are helping students understand how their personal strengths can lead to professional success. Workshops and individual sessions with students have been very popular for students as they discover how to employ newly recognized strengths for professional success. We are currently offering mock interview workshops as well. Susanne Salehi offers personalized advice on resume building, and we have an open door policy for students who need assistance.

The Laney Graduate School is one of more than 50 PhD granting institutions participating in an important national project: Understanding PhD Career Pathways for Program Improvement. Under the direction of the Council of Graduate Schools, the project surveys alumni three, eight, and fifteen years past degree completion each fall to learn about graduates' career pathways and the skills they use in their professions. Each spring, second- and fifth-year doctoral students will be surveyed about their career ambitions and the skills they think they will need to succeed. The purpose is to collect data that will allow doctoral program faculty and graduate administrators to ensure that our students receive contemporary training that positions them well for the future.

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One final note in this area is our strengthened ties with the graduate student leadership. Emory's student government system has undergone important reorganization in the last two years, in ways that benefit graduate student governance. Along with that, we established a standing, semester based meeting with the Laney Graduate Student Council Executive Committee and the full LGS senior staff. These activities have improved the transparency of LGS administrative processes and improved the communication of student needs to LGS administration.

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All of this work – recruiting as well as our work around student well-being and development – is and will continue to be infused by a commitment to diversity and inclusion.

Our Assistant Dean for Diversity, Inclusion and Community Engagement, Amanda Marie James, is leading initiatives that focus on the recruitment and successful matriculation of diverse scholars. LGS has become a leader and partner in diversity in the greater Emory community through Amanda's leadership, serving on campus-wide committee representing the LGS:

- the Social and Racial Justice Commission, Part 4, Campus-Wide Social Justice Education,
- the Advisory Board for IMSD, and
- the Search Committees for the Director of the Office for Racial and Cultural Engagement in Campus Life, and for the new University Chief Diversity Officer.

LGS is also represented nationally at some of the premier recruitment and engagement conferences across the disciplines such as ABRCMS, IRT, Mellon Mays and multiple McNair conferences. And, just last weekend, LGS was inducted into the Edward A. Bouchet Graduate Honor Society, at [the annual Yale-Bouchet Conference](#). Next year, at about this time, we will have our first student inductees, up to five doctoral students. Stay tuned for information on how to apply for this prestigious recognition. The BGHS recognizes outstanding scholarly achievement and promotes diversity and excellence in doctoral education and faculty.

In conjunction with encouraging our faculty to recruit diverse scholars, we have established a multidimensional approach creating a fellowship for students from historically under-represented groups, dedicated to excellence and diversity, the Centennial Scholars Fellowship, and promotion and celebration of excellence in Women in Sciences, the WINS Fellowship. Also, with the addition of our new Program Coordinator, Naima Barton, EDGE was able to develop a 1st year guide, "Living and Learning in Atlanta", which highlights potential housing, grocery stores, K-12 schools, personal and social attractions in the city and many other resources needed when recruiting potential graduate students especially those from diverse backgrounds.

In addition to increasing the number of diverse applicants, we believe our faculty will admit diverse scholars with more confidence if they know the scholar. To this end, LGS is sponsoring a summer research program, SOAR, Summer Opportunities for Academic Research for non-Emory undergraduate scholars. These scholars are from historically underrepresented groups in higher education in the U.S. We will have 25 scholars total with more than 50 percent of these scholars being rising seniors who will work with matched faculty members for 10 weeks this summer. They will be integrated into the long-standing Emory College SURE program, and will do additional professional development within LGS. In contrast to many other residential summer programs, we

have scholars from the humanities and the social sciences as well as the traditional summer program attendees in the biomedical, biological, and natural sciences.

With regard to retention efforts and for student satisfaction, we are working diligently to build and sustain an inclusive community where diversity is valued and respected, and where communities of students have opportunities to come together to contribute their voices to an inclusive, welcoming, and satisfying Emory. EDGE, Emory Diversifying Graduate Education, has partnered with the LGBTQ Life Office, the Women's Center, the RESPECT Office, and Student Involvement, Leadership and Transitions (SILT) to implement programming that is both personally rewarding and professionally satisfying.

EDGE also worked to establish affinity groups for building community within and across the diversity of our scholars. These affinity groups include Women in STEM, Women in Social Sciences and Humanities, Diverse Scholars in STEM, Diverse Scholars in Social Sciences and Humanities, Scholars from HBCUs, HSIs, and MSIs, 1st Generation Scholars and Scholars who have moved 500 Miles or More Away from home. Our students have asked for these opportunities to connect and to establish communities, and we have responded.

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On another diversity front, the Laney Graduate School continues to benefit from the innovative contributions that our international student body provides. We are honored to say that despite the challenges that international students face, in terms of visa restrictions or political pressures, they continue to choose Laney as a place where they can pursue pathways into the future in the academy, or in research and industry.

Beyond our campus, Laney continues to support meaningful exchanges for faculty and students with the rest of the world. As the result of our partnership with Queensland University, we continue to host student exchanges. Later this month, we will expand our opportunities with Queensland through a joint symposium exploring our shared capacity to study infectious diseases. Just last month, Laney joined a select number of universities that will work with CAPES within the Ministry of Higher Education in Brazil in a joint funding model that will support admitted Brazilian PhD students to Emory, infusing our programs with even more diverse points of view and international perspectives. Finally, our English Language Support Program is serving beyond our campus by establishing the Laney Global Teaching Fellowship. This fellowship trains graduate students to facilitate multilingual classrooms through hands-on experience. The first fellow, Mike Lehman, an English PhD, will be joining ELSP director Mackenzie Bristow at the College of Applied Sciences and Engineering at Nanjing University in Nanjing, China for three weeks in May to work with undergraduates and graduates.

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As you heard from Executive Council chair Larry Boise, this year the Council reviewed several proposals for new graduate programs. A new 4+1 BA/MA dual degree in Bioethics was approved and is awaiting final approval by the Provost and the Board of Trustees. A proposal for a new doctoral program in Global Health and Development, expected to draw a wide range of graduate faculty from Emory College, Rollins School of Public Health, the School of Medicine, several Emory research centers, the CDC and other international non-profit and health organizations, was

approved for an external review. As a part of the proposal and review process, this spring three external reviewers, scholars in global health, epidemiology, animal science, and anthropology, visited campus, talked with faculty and LGS leadership, and provided a report with excellent recommendations. Faculty are working on addressing those recommendations and will submit a revised proposal to the Executive Council.

Finally, a proposal for a new MS in Biomedical Innovation and Development – Advanced Therapeutics is currently being reviewed by the Council. This proposed program’s goal is to train future leaders in the translation of advanced therapeutics from the bench to the bedside, bringing medical breakthroughs to patients. These leaders will join the workforce in the emergent industries of gene therapy, cell therapies, and tissue engineering and regenerative medicine.

These requests demonstrate the Laney Graduate School’s commitment to and engagement in interdisciplinarity at Emory. New proposals from the faculty recognize that innovative and competitive 21st century graduate research and training environments must have substantially reduced structural barriers to interdisciplinary research and scholarship.

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These new and proposed programs demonstrate again the crucial role of the graduate school in a comprehensive research university such as Emory. We are the keepers of doctoral education – our mission is to guide, promote, and organize doctoral training, and to advocate for its priorities and best practices in broader contexts. But we are never alone in this work: faculty, staff, schools, units – all of you touch graduate students, and all of you are touched by graduate students. In a comprehensive research university, when graduate education thrives, it is because many people in many positions care. And when graduate education thrives, it benefits every part of the comprehensive research university, from faculty research to undergraduate teaching to administrative work to student support.

This context continues to drive my thinking and my values as a leader and for our shared responsibilities and roles in higher education. In his books, *The Great American University* and *Toward a More Perfect University*, [Jonathan Cole, sociologist and University Professor, Columbia University](#), describes how our research universities rose to eminence, why our institutions are “indispensable” to our nation and the world, and why we, as university community members and those who benefit, must work to protect the university. How we address some of the larger and more enduring challenges of higher education will define our future contributions, as individual institutions and in the larger context of global higher education.

At the turn of the last century, Emory joined the ranks of great research universities, and was admitted into the AAU because of commitments to research and doctoral education. And now, as we move towards the second half of this century – where the students we admit this year will finish around 2025 and work well beyond 2050 -- we must ask ourselves how well are we preparing for our collective higher education futures? Are we defending *against* new definitions and approaches for how we “work” on teaching, learning, research, and scholarship, or are we taking the time to discuss, design, and implement *21st century pedagogies and curriculum* that take advantage of discoveries, impact, and outcomes, necessarily blurring the distinctions between and among programs, fields, and disciplines?

At this centennial moment, I encourage each of us to take a moment of personal leadership, and ask are we thinking, acting, preparing for the next century? How can we animate the four “One Emory” pillars to achieve eminence, build and sustain a reputation of being an academic community of choice, commit to innovation through both scholarship and creative expression, and couple Emory with Atlanta for a shared future of impact?

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Doctoral education is a collaborative effort built on partnerships across the university, but there is one thing I want to claim all for ourselves: our 100th birthday! Of course we are celebrating!

To mark the milestone, we have a year-long celebration of events and academic programming to honor the legacy of the last 100 years, and catapult us into the next century of graduate education at Emory.

The celebrations began on January 26th with an event right here in the Carlos Museum, also celebrating their Centennial, with an evening of fellowship and reflection featuring 2017 graduate, Dr. Fahamu Pecou and tours of his current exhibition, *Do or Die: Affect, Ritual, Resistance*. In January we also launched our Centennial website featuring a history of the LGS, the year’s schedule of events and a dynamic page of 100 reasons to support graduate education. Banners fill the campus, PSA’s fill the airwaves. The Celebrations continue with a reception at the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra on May 9th, and alumni events on the West Coast, East Coast and Midwest. We had our first alumni event outside of Atlanta in Boston in March and it was a huge success.

Academic programming begins this semester with the launch of our Centennial Lecture Series. The series will feature renowned scholars in fields ranging from the biomedical sciences, social sciences and humanities to celebrate all that is graduate education in the LGS. The first lecture will feature Dr. Maria Carrillo, Chief Scientific Officer at the Alzheimer’s Association on April 17th. Beginning in the Fall term, we host Dr. Alondra Nelson, President of the Social Science Research Council, September 26th, and on October 16th we host Dr. Jonathan Metz, renowned professor and author of recently published and acclaimed book, *Dying of Whiteness*. Our final capstone lecture, on October 24th, will be Dr. Jonathan Cole, whom I mentioned earlier.

To learn more about the centennial events, please spend some time on the centennial website: www.gs.emory.edu/100 – the link can also be found on the LGS homepage. Our advancement team is working creatively and persistently to raise contributions to our Centennial Fellowship Fund – to honor the last century and invest in the next. Direct mail appeals will be sent to all LGS alumni and we’ll continue to post about the centennial events through social media. At every turn, we’ll acknowledge this special milestone – including our upcoming commencement.

Thank you, again, for all you do for graduate education at Emory.

Now, please enjoy this special video we made for the occasion. [Play video here](#)