

**The
University of Florida:
Competition and Choices**

The Inaugural Address
of
JOHN V. LOMBARDI

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Mr. President," the reporter asked, "if you had known what would happen during your first months, would you have still wanted to come to the University of Florida?"

At one time or another, every great university suffers through profound personal tragedy and budget crises, every university with a major intercollegiate athletic program encounters difficulties, and every predominantly white university in America struggles with the issues of cultural diversity. To be sure, not all institutions see these issues reach crisis proportions within a few months as they have here, but such a testing quickly reveals the strength and character of a university.

Let me tell you, as I have told others, that this university -- with its community, students, faculty, staff, and friends throughout the state-- has responded magnificently. Without hesitation, each crisis, each unanticipated event triggered our administration, students, faculty, community, and friends into a careful, compassionate, expert, and caring response. The pride that we share in this university, its people, and its friends, knows no bounds, and my enthusiasm for this place, its strength of character and its future has grown stronger as I have observed this university in action.

"Yes," I said to the reporter, "I'm even more pleased to participate in this extraordinary university's life."

"Oh," said the reporter, disappointed by my answer, "let me ask you about football."

The Story

When I came to Gainesville to talk about the University of Florida, I told the search committee that every great university needs four elements for its success: a story, the substance, a plan, and the resources. After I spent some time here meeting faculty, talking with students, visiting alumni, working with administrators and staff, and walking the campus, I had a long visit with my oldest and most trusted academic mentor, Don José Gómez. As we sat down to enjoy a cafecito and talk about university life, Don José asked me,

"Pues, Lombardi, you told these folks that every great university has a story explaining its vision. What is the University of Florida's story?"

Few universities enter the closing years of the twentieth century with expectations so high, achievements so great,

and a vision so clear as the University of Florida. Those of you who have lived with and built this university during this generation recognize the remarkable growth in the quality, the size, and the breadth of intellectual offerings of this university community; those of us who have arrived but recently recognize those achievements by joining you here. The University of Florida is a remarkable place, a land-grant university serving a statewide constituency with nationally competitive programs in practically every major field of academic interest.

Those of us new to this university seek with admiration the source of this growth and this accomplishment, and we find it in many places. We find it in a state legislature that constructed a carefully articulated higher education system which recognizes quality as it promotes access. We find it in the legislative imagination that promotes research, encourages private giving to public universities, rewards the achievements of eminent scholars, and recognizes the promise of outstanding students. We find it in the wisdom of regents and chancellors whose attention to the educational needs of an ever-expanding state encompasses the mission of comprehensive, nationally competitive universities. We find it in the leadership of the university's presidents whose styles, capabilities, and ambitions have matched and capitalized on the challenges of their time. We find it in the energy and the quality of the students whose intensity and entrepreneurial responsibility have made campus life vital and competitive. We find it in our staff whose commitment transcends job requirements to constitute a substantial contribution to the effectiveness and quality of all that is done here. We find it in the enthusiasm of the alumni for whom the university's academic achievements remain constant parts of their daily lives and whose commitment to our success translates their enthusiasm as students into their support as alumni. We find it in our friends throughout the state and nation who bring to this university and its programs their time and their treasure so that we might succeed.

Even with this remarkable complement of support and commitment, every quality university depends on the excellence of its faculty. All of us who have come to love this place and its academic traditions, to celebrate its many achievements, depend on the faculty for the substance of the enterprise. First-quality universities come in many shapes and sizes, some with large campuses and beautiful buildings, some with small student bodies and scattered facilities, but every first-quality university

sustains a first-quality faculty. There can be no compromise on this, for without quality faculty a university will be just another place. Clearly, then, the triumph of our predecessors has been the genius to bring into being a first-rank faculty whose success and achievements build on the substance and rely on the support of all the rest of us who celebrate and contribute to the University of Florida.

For all the success of the University of Florida, shared as it is with so many members of our many constituencies, the next decade will sorely test our resolve and our wisdom. University quality is but a fragile thing, built not only of the bricks and mortar of the buildings but also on the quality work that we do here each day. University quality is a cumulative thing, each achievement building on the last, accumulating the substance and tradition of excellence that, in the end, becomes a self-sustaining and self-generating characteristic of the institution.

One year, five years, or a decade is not sufficient time to build that self-sustaining quality; a generation is but a beginning; and the achievement of a second generation at nationally competitive levels of excellence is the critical test. We have a generation of experience in building a nationally—indeed internationally—competitive institution for the state of Florida; the next decade will show whether we can make that success self-generating and self-sustaining, capable of superseding temporary problems of finance or governance to confirm the University of Florida as a first-rank American university.

**The Substance:
Research, Teaching, and Service**

"How's that?" I asked Don José.

"Well," he said, "that's ok, but you talk too fast. Anyway, you said that a great university needs substance too. What did you mean by that?"

Private or public, first-rank, nationally competitive universities share many common characteristics, but the distinguishing feature of great universities is their bedrock commitment to the trilogy of university life: research, teaching, and service. We hear and speak much about these three canons of our academic faith, but like most accepted truths, these things bear constant reexamination to be sure we recognize both their meaning and their interrelationship.

Research, teaching, and service; all three must exist for us to claim kinship with the first rank of American universities. Research, because no university prospers without a commitment to advancing knowledge, to discovering new ways of thought, new understanding, new doctrine, and new fact. Research, because this commitment to the advancement of knowledge defines a university. Research, then, because we are a university.

Teaching, because the transmission of knowledge and the shaping of generations of capable citizens constitutes a key rationale for universities; because through the inspiration and discipline of explanation and instruction our faculty enhance their understanding of the relationship

of their research to the holistic concerns of the university; because teaching provides the common thread that connects this generation of scholars to the next generation of citizens; and because the student represents one of the finest products of the scholar's mind.

Service, because America's great land-grant universities bring research and teaching to focus on the public good, on the achievement of success for all citizens, and on the direct application of specialized knowledge to the solution of practical problems; because the university, its scholars, teachers, staff and students, must return the benefits of the community's investment back to the people. Service, because we are a public university and must serve our constituencies.

To give equal weight to each element of this trilogy is not to make them the same. Research, teaching, and service respond to different incentives, measure quality by different norms, and operate within a different logic.

Research, the quintessential university function, represents the university's contribution to a large, national and international conversation about the meaning, extent, and substance of life. Whether in basic sciences, humanities, the professions, social sciences, or the arts, researchers work and publish for a national and international audience. Biologists speak less to their colleagues in Gainesville than to their peers throughout the world in Warsaw, Tokyo, and Bonn; historians find their most critical audiences in Los Angeles, Paris, and Caracas; sculptors exhibit in shows in New York, Paris, and London, as well as in Gainesville.

Consequently, the research of our faculty and students speaks to and is judged primarily by peers outside the university and outside the state of Florida. And it is, to a very large degree, this national and international opinion that constitutes and creates the University of Florida as a first-rank, AACU university.

Research, whether in big-money science, humanistic inquiry, or artistic creativity, for example, must be competitive with the best worldwide. We can identify and measure research in our chosen fields and we must organize ourselves to continue and enhance that success. But the competition in university level research will become so intense over the next decade that the University of Florida must be sure it has mobilized the most effective research program possible in fields where we have both strength and competitive advantage if we are to meet that competition.

Teaching speaks to a local audience and is judged locally. Teaching, unlike research, rarely produces a visible product. Teaching is a fugitive art, it takes place and leaves no direct record except for the varying impact on students. Teaching provides little evidence to be examined by peers. Our success as a first-rank university depends, nonetheless, on our ability to teach our students well, transmit our knowledge effectively, and cultivate critical and creative skills in our students. We know much about quality instruction, and we must learn how to evaluate and reward teaching as we do research.

We must think even more about what we teach than about how we teach. Few subjects attract such intense scrutiny from parents, students, critics, and faculty as the undergraduate curriculum. Some would have us return to a simpler time when science, humanities, social science, and the arts could be encompassed in some coherent fashion within the scope of four collegiate years. That, of course, given the tremendous proliferation and fragmentation of knowledge will not be possible, nor should a university seek to limit the range of an undergraduate experience to some simple subset of the university's capabilities.

Still, we need a better structure for the basic curriculum and a clearer rationale for the four-year collegiate experience. We also must be certain that every undergraduate can receive effective academic advising so that the rich opportunities of a great university become assets rather than confusing obstacles. We have the quality of students and the flexibility and breadth of program here at the University of Florida to invent a model approach to coherence and structure within intellectual diversity, and that challenge must be met if we are to prepare our students for the twenty-first century.

Florida, a university proud of its land-grant tradition and accomplishments, has a major commitment to service. This commitment appears most visibly in the work of IFAS, where the research and extension system has brought the benefits of university teaching and research to people throughout the state at locations in each county and in the many programs of the Health Center and Shands Hospital that treat patients from every corner of the state. Many of our colleges have additional initiatives of this kind in engineering, architecture, business, law, veterinary medicine, or continuing studies, for example. With a statewide mission, the University of Florida must bring the expertise and knowledge that is our greatest accomplishment to the people of our community and our state.

Throughout our academic lives, each of us on the faculty does research, teaching, and service in varying amounts at different times. Sometimes we teach more than we research, sometimes we serve more than we teach, sometimes we do all three equally. Rarely, however, do we live our lives, year in and year out, with research, teaching, and service each occupying exactly one-third of our time. As we improve our incentives and rewards, to reflect better our values, we must be sure we recognize the changes that accompany individual academic growth and resist the temptation to identify ourselves permanently as research, teaching, or service faculty.

The Plan: Competition and Choices

"See, " I replied to Don José, "it's easy to talk about the University of Florida's substance."

"Sure," he said, "you outlined lots of good things, but when they interviewed you, you promised a plan to achieve those things."

"Ah," I replied, "the plan is actually a process, its content the work of the many people who care about this

university. No president can know all of what is required, and without the committed participation of the university's constituencies, there can be no plan."

"Well, then," said my friend and mentor José Gómez, "where do you start on the plan?"

Within the next decade the basic constructs of American university life will come under great stress, buffeted by the same winds of change that have been remaking the world and America's place in it. Universities, because they carry the traditions and histories of our culture and at the same time create the opportunities for our future, must respond quickly or lose their effectiveness. Rarely do universities die dramatic deaths. Rather, when they fail to change, they simply stagnate and decline, often imperceptibly, until, at the end of a decade or so, the institution finds itself unequal to the competition from world-class universities by virtue of having made the wrong choices.

At the University of Florida, we will make the right choices and we will meet the competition, for to do otherwise is to deny the effort and the leadership of this remarkable generation of university growth. Competition and choices--these are the key issues of the 1990s for our university. Competition, because many share our aspirations for excellence and quality, and the resources and talent required are scarce. Choices, because our ability to compete depends on the choices each of us makes, choices of programs to pursue, faculty to hire, students to support, resources to accumulate. We cannot and should not attempt to do everything falling within the domain of the university, but we must choose to do the right things.

If we are to meet the competition for resources and talent, we must review our programs and our priorities, we must measure our success and our opportunities, and we must recognize our limitations. This is the work of many people, faculty, students, staff, alumni, legislators, regents, and our other constituencies throughout the state and the nation. The University of Florida supports and collaborates with its colleagues in the State University System, but we also compete in a national and international academic arena. We must examine ourselves, render our own judgments, and select our own choices.

A university is a constantly changing, living organization. Its work and its people never stop but continue studying, creating, researching, and serving; and so, we must make our reviews match the growth and change of our university, responding to opportunities and resolving problems as we encounter them. Generally operating through targeted, specific task forces, we will move quickly to frame the agenda and then move as rapidly as possible to implement solutions that have been thoroughly reviewed, discussed, and revised by appropriate committees and councils of the university, the colleges and schools, the departments, the regents, or other interested groups. Faculty, students, and others affected by plans and proposals must participate in the review and decision for these proposals to succeed.

Some of the crucial elements in our plan can be easily identified; others will become clearer as we pursue our continuing evaluation. Undergraduate education heads a list of topics and currently has an initial task force at work on a plan; graduate education with its multiple dimensions of research and instruction requires study; the university's plan for encouraging and supporting the research and creative activities of the faculty and staff needs review; and our commitment to a single university approach to interdisciplinary programs and cross campus collaboration requires reinforcement. This university has an obligation to reform and refocus its administrative structures wherever improvements and efficiencies can be found. Florida's destiny is to lead the nation in international trade and commerce, and our citizens require the University of Florida to continue to enhance the international dimensions of every program of this institution.

Faculty and staff spirit and morale are exceptionally high, their success and their creative approaches to teaching, research, and service standing as testimony. But this extraordinary asset can only be preserved and enhanced if we can develop strong incentives and rewards, compensation patterns that recognize merit in every aspect of university life and that approach the norms of the external marketplace. As we plan for the development of our faculty and staff, we will insist on creating an ethnically diverse and gender-balanced faculty, for no other result will achieve our goals.

"Sure," said Don José, "That's fine, but can you give me an example of what might be done with one or another of these issues."

"Ok," I said, "That's easy. The university has been working on a plan to enhance the quality of student life since last semester, and since I didn't invent it, I can brag about it."

University life, once reserved for a small segment of the privileged classes, now belongs to all the citizens of the state of Florida. We, as a public land-grant university, carry a special obligation to serve the whole state of Florida and all of its citizens. This obligation requires us to compete for the best students in Florida, wherever they live and whatever their ethnicity or gender. To succeed in this competition, we must review all aspects of student life to guarantee that we can attract our share of students from Florida. This university belongs to the people of the state, and our student body must represent those people. Students who come to Florida must all find the academic environment here welcoming, supportive, and engaging.

We have an exceptional tradition of student leadership, initiative, and responsibility, and we must build on that tradition, extending it to attract men and women students of all ethnic backgrounds. Student life is the responsibility of all of us—faculty, staff, students, and community—and the quality of our human environment must be competitive enough to attract and retain students from all of Florida. We must also attract some of the best students nationally and internationally to guarantee the breadth of experience encompassed within the student body.

We have made an admirable start with the results of the Quality of Life Task Force and the impact of the

university's People Awareness Week, but success in this effort requires each of us to find, each day, each week, each year the energy and imagination to bridge the gap that separates us into such diverse cultural traditions as African American, Hispanic American, Native American, or Asian American and identifies us in addition by race and gender. Only by constant and continuing effort can we make the multiple traditions and perspectives of a diverse state part of our university and enrich our academic experience. This, like most truly significant goals, will take constant attention, and even if not fully achieved in our time, will enrich each of us in the measure of our commitment.

The Resources

For once impressed, Don José commented, "That's pretty clever, how you get everyone to commit themselves to the task, take responsibility for their own contributions to the general goal, and insist on effective action. But where will the university get the resources? It still takes money to make it happen."

"Yes," I said, "finally, we come to the resources."

As we create our story, enhance the substance, and develop our plan, we will identify competitive advantages and difficult choices. Many of our choices will depend on the resources we can get. While careful choices will give us the best competitive advantage at the least cost, the University of Florida will need additional resources for salaries, student services, libraries, buildings, equipment, and the other elements of a great university. Three major sources of revenue support every great public university, and Florida is no exception.

The state of Florida and its students have an obligation to contribute to the baseline funding of this university. The state needs to fund the education of its students at a level at least equivalent to the national average. We are now at about 70% of the national average as a state, and we are declining year by year. To fund education statewide at any less is to default on the state's commitment to becoming a national leader. Students, too, have an obligation to contribute a reasonable share to the cost of their education, even at a public university. With excessively low tuition, the state and the university find themselves providing a large scholarship to every student in the university, whether they need it or not. Just as we expect the state to increase its support to match national norms, so too should student tuition approach the norm, with the assurance that financial aid remains adequate for all who need it.

As the state and the students do their part, and we believe they will, this university must continue to develop its own sources of support. Our campaign to embrace excellence has demonstrated that alumni and friends share the goal of creating a first-rank, self-sustaining and self-generating university at the University of Florida. This university's first major campaign has exceeded all expectations, and we must continue to develop this strong private giving to supplement those elements of our program that fall outside the state mandate. No great university can sustain

its excellence without a dynamic, strong, continuing, and effective program of private support.

Faculty provide the final resource for the university by capturing competitive grants and contracts, patents or licenses, fellowships and awards at every opportunity, bringing their scholarship, teaching, and creative energy before their peers for funding from federal, state, corporate or foundation sources. One of the distinguishing marks of a great university comes from a faculty that succeeds in the competition for the external resources that enhance quality and promote research. No great university can rely on its state alone for research funding, although the state's creative use of matching programs and other research incentives multiplies the success of a quality faculty. That success brings essential resources as it tests the quality of our work in the clear light of peer review.

This creative combination of public, private, and competitive funding can create the resource base needed to build the self-sustaining and self-generating university we seek. Few of these resources arrive by accident. We must plan carefully, invest wisely in project development, seek new sources, develop innovative programs, and persuade our state and national legislators, donors, foundations, corporations, and competitive funding agencies to join us in making this university succeed.

"Mi querido amigo," said my old friend Don José Gómez, "this has been fun, but it looks to me like the University of Florida has it all figured out. I'm going home. Hasta luego."

"But, Don José," I called out as he left the room, "no one should imagine that the next decade in the life of this university will be easy or comfortable."

Quite the contrary; we enter the 1990s with a keen sense of strained resources and exaggerated expectations. But because the University of Florida has the story, the substance in its people and its programs, the plan for its success, and the resources for its support, I am persuaded that we will succeed in this intense competition. We who inherit this university's traditions bear a special obligation to carry forward the invention of this world-class university. We must use the decade of the 1990s to mobilize every element of creativity, support, and imagination to make the right choices and to meet the competition.

Always, though, we need faith and belief. Universities are complex and creative, they live long lives and change greatly over time. Most of us become part of a great university in the middle of its historical trajectory. We can look back and find the origins of its current spirit and greatness, but we cannot really know how the university will fare in the generations ahead. As it is with our own lives where we cannot predict the world of our children nor assure their success in it, so it is with a university. We commit ourselves to the pursuit of university life because we have faith in the power and the value of knowledge, and we invest our energy, intellect, and emotional commitment in the university because we believe that our work matters and that our world will be a much better place thanks to the work that we do.

When we have the opportunity, as we do here, to commit ourselves to the building of a great university in the making, when we realize that our university can complete its transformation in our generation, we need to celebrate the accident of fate that gives us this one chance in our lifetime to complete the creation and invention of a first-rank, self-sustaining and self-generating American university in the University of Florida.

Cathryn and I thank you for the privilege of joining with you in this extraordinary adventure.