*From your perspective at the university, what is your hope for how SU can live into our vision to be a progressive and innovative Jesuit Catholic University?  What could that look like as we move forward?”*

Thank you to the organizers of this event for inviting me to participate and share my perspectives and thank you to those of you on the panel with me for sharing yours.

I want to start with innovation. Innovation to me suggests new ideas, new methods, new approaches – doing things differently from how we have in the past. How well are we doing that? We say we are innovative and progressive but by whose standards? I engage with students seeking the services of LAP as well as students offering those services on a daily basis and it is very interesting to hear their perspectives on how they believe the institution lives up to it’s vision. While I recognize that it is crucial for us to be thoughtful, deliberate and strategic about how we move forward as an institution, I do have some frustrations around our seeming hesitation with regards to certain issues. Over the almost 17 years I have been here, I have seen things happen at warp speed when the university wants it to and I have seen us gather information ad infinitum around other issues before what feels like taking the path of least resistance. And through most of it, what strikes me comes down to our will as an institution. Our will to take risks… the risk of upsetting or creating discomfort for specific groups at specific times and so what ends up happening, is that we end up pleasing no one. The fable of the man, the boy and his donkey comes to mind.

We strive to be a leader in inclusive excellence… I have to admit that I have a reaction each time we note that SU has welcomed our most diverse class in it’s history. While this is a wonderful accomplishment, I am concerned about our ability to retain said students, (and faculty and staff in fact) of these diverse backgrounds. When we think of retention, how often do we put the onus of success on those individuals rather than looking at the environment into which we are inviting them? What work do we need to do for and on ourselves in order to foster a climate that is conducive to retaining these individuals? They need to see themselves here, represented by administration, faculty and staff that they identify with and a community that is truly collaborative.

Finally, yes, resources are scarce yet if we operate from a place of scarcity, that breeds divisiveness and feeds into the hierarchical system of academia. If we are to become the institution we profess to be, it truly means partnership across the campus community – stepping up in our various roles when we need to, and recognizing when we need to step back or step aside. It means we need to listen to our community who is immersed in the work and when we do listen, whose voice gets heard? Is it the loudest? The most persistent? Or is it the ones with well being of the institution at the centre of their thinking?

I have been on Staff Council for a few years now and we continue to talk about staff attrition, and more pointedly since the pandemic, as we often hear the statistic that 42% of our staff is new within the last 2 years. To me, yes, that is a staggering number! However, the number that stands out to me is the 58% that has stayed. We need to examine why folks are leaving (and not just attribute that to the pandemic) and why folks are staying. As one of the folks who has stayed, I know that I am tired, that **we** are tired on so many levels but for so many reasons, we stay to be a part of the bigger solution.

One of the reasons I have stayed at SU for this long is because of the mission and what we strive to be. I know, they say to be careful what you wish for and yet, I do wish, rather, I hope, that SU has the will to do the necessary work in order to find our way.