

## Alumni Awards on Our 125<sup>th</sup> Year

- *May 5, 2017*

- *Stephen V. Sundborg, S.J.*

I have been privileged to be president at twenty of the thirty-two of these annual alumni award banquets and celebrations. It is another example of the wonderful things Fr. Sullivan began and that I have been privileged to sustain and to grow.

Welcome to these Alumni Awards which this year kicks off our first ever Grand Alumni Reunion. Maybe we are starting something that others will sustain and develop. My special thanks to Susan Vosper and all of her team in the Office of Alumni Engagement, and to Katy Greve and the Alumni Board of Governors for making this evening and this weekend special and memorable.

This year I come to the Annual Alumni Awards with a renewed and deepened sense of gratitude and humility. Together with you in this anniversary year I have had ten months to learn about, ponder, digest, and reflect, and pray about our 125 year history which we have been celebrating so remarkably well this whole year leading up to our Commencement at The Key in five weeks.

My journey this year began as one of interest, fascination and curiosity as I explored and learned about the eras, the episodes, and eccentrics of our long and meandering history. The written histories focus—perhaps excessively—on the presidents, the Jesuits, the professors, and the pranks of the students. A more real history would be the history of our alumni, from the first three of them in 1909 to the 77,000 and counting today. Only God could write that history—and in fact God does write that history—in the lives, the callings, the service, the families, and the commitments to faith and to the common good of our alumni. What a godly work we have been about!

As the year has moved along what has emerged is joy and celebration. Joy in an Immaculate Conception Church at the Mass of the Holy Spirit packed with students wearing red; joy in a parade to light a torch at our chapel; joy in a gala which honored our whole Jesuit community; joy in lighting up in red our town on our homecoming weekend; joy in our alumni magazines and mission day celebrating this milestone; joy in all the people who have said to me this year, “Seattle U rocks!”.

This is a special evening of joy with this year’s alumni award winners who wonderfully represent what we are all about:

- Alexandra Kennedy: A recent alum of our School of Law (which we didn’t have for 100 years), advocate for immigrants.
- Carolyn Ronis: A double alum, doubly committed to the eradication of hunger and abuse.
- Jim Jorgenson: Educator, school principal, sports commissioner, regent.

- Dr. Marilyn Gist: Leading and modelling in herself one of the top-ranked executive leadership programs in the nation.
- Jim Dykeman: Committed alumnus to the Jesuit mission of the university, to the College of Arts and Sciences, mentor to our students.
- May McCarthy: Innovating business leader, author, speaker, philanthropist and animator of student entrepreneurs.

I look on these six whom we honor tonight and I am filled with joy. I say, “Wow! These are just six of the 77,000.” What a very deep bench we have for alumni award winners.

The journey of this 125<sup>th</sup> year brings me always and increasingly, and especially this evening, to humility in having some role as president in continuing this tradition, to awe at the sacrifices and accomplishments in our history, especially our alumni, to gratitude to be a part of this living and thriving Catholic and Jesuit educational mission, to prayer remembering those who have gone before us and are with God and daily payer for our students now and alumni of tomorrow that God might bless and guide them; to confident hope in a future which will be the continued work of Jesus Christ among us for the sake of the kingdom. Our history as a university is part of a bigger history... and that history is God’s history with God’s people, which is all people.

Tonight we have everything for which to be grateful, proud, and hopeful. Let us celebrate these Alumni Awards in our 125<sup>th</sup> year with special joy.