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

*Lisa A. Tedesco  
April 17, 2018*

Good afternoon, and welcome to this year's Dean's Address. It is always an honor to stand before you to report on the state of the Laney Graduate School, and I look forward to updating you on some of this year's progress as well as the priorities ahead.

This address comes during a time of planning at Emory. In her first year, President Sterk defined and framed emerging areas of priority. And with our new provost, Dr. Dwight McBride, now firmly in place, as well as other key leadership appointments, we are full-steam ahead at work on the University's next strategic plan. We are fortunate to have a provost who supports graduate education and, from his own experience as dean of The Graduate School at Northwestern, he understands the value of graduate education to the research university and for Emory's aspirations. I was asked to serve on Emory's Strategic Planning Advisory Committee and look forward to working with the Provost and others to ensure that the needs and interests of graduate education continue to be represented in these discussions.

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Before we get started, 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: Carol Anderson from History, Carla Berg from Behavioral Sciences and Health Education, Larry Boise from the Graduate Division of Biological and Biomedical Sciences, Patricia Brennan from Psychology, Council chair Andra Gillespie from Political Science, Penelope Howards from Epidemiology, Roxani Margariti from Islamic Civilizations Studies, Andrew Mitchell from Philosophy, and Jeremy Sarnat from Environmental Health Sciences. Thank you all for your service and leadership.

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Reflecting on the past year, I would like to address some of the ways that we are accomplishing our mission.

**We continue to focus on efforts to diversify the student body and to foster an environment of inclusion and community.**

First, as I announced in an email last week, I am pleased to share that LGS Interim Associate Director for Diversity and Community Dr. Amanda Marie James has been appointed LGS Chief Diversity Officer and Assistant Dean for Diversity, Inclusion, and Community Engagement. Amanda has done an outstanding job with EDGE programming this year, and she has been a leading voice in our efforts to modernize LGS recruiting and admissions practices for diversity and beyond. I'll speak more about that shortly, but first, I would like to offer a few highlights from her work this year.

We continue to leverage national partnerships to advance our diversity efforts.

- Emory University will soon be officially inducted as a member of the **Edward Alexander Bouchet Graduate Honor Society**, co-founded by Yale and Howard universities. The society is named in honor of Dr. Bouchet, the first African American doctoral recipient in the U.S. and “seeks to develop a network of preeminent scholars who exemplify academic and personal excellence, foster environments of support, and serve as examples of scholarship, leadership, character, service and advocacy for students who have been traditionally underrepresented in the academy.” Membership is highly selective and gives our students, alumni and faculty across all disciplines the opportunity to develop professional networks and present research.
- This year, Amanda represented LGS on the selection committees for both the **GEM Consortium and the National Name Exchange**, enhancing our access and ability to review prospective applicants from historically under-represented groups and reach out directly, encouraging application to LGS. We identified several high-achieving prospective students through GEM, and they have been admitted.
- Also this year, Amanda joined the board of the Hispanic Association for Colleges and Universities and is engaged in advocacy on Capitol Hill on matters related to DACA and to securing funding and other support for Hispanic students. The annual conference for HACU will take place in Atlanta this year, and we are seeking opportunities to be visible and engage that growing network.

This summer, we will pilot a new summer scholars program called **LGS Soar or Summer Opportunities for Academic Research**. Six students from historically underrepresented groups will have research opportunities at Emory for 10 weeks. LGS will cover stipend, housing and registration fees for the students. We look forward to welcoming these prospective students and updating you on the pilot results in the coming year. Amanda is eager to provide you with more information for how you can be involved, too.

Perhaps most significantly, this year we debuted a new and more aggressive approach to our diversity fellowships, the **Centennial Scholars Program**. A number of you are already familiar with the new Centennial Scholars program and process, but for those of you that are not, please allow me to give you a bit of background.

For many years, LGS offered the EGDF or Emory Graduate Diversity Fellowship, and for a while, that program served our needs. Increasingly, however, practices at other universities left the EGDF financially uncompetitive and too inflexible to withstand the very competitive recruitment environment.

We approached the framework for the Centennial Scholars Program knowing several things:

- We needed to respond to those changes in student stipend practices to improve our ability to compete with our peers and bring the best students to Laney.
- We needed flexibility, so that we could both craft offers and/or match those of others in a timely way.
- We needed to increase enrollment of students from historically under-represented groups in higher education.
- And to truly compete and compete successfully, we needed an engaged, highly collaborative partnership between the programs and central LGS leadership.

This admissions cycle, we launched the Centennial Scholars Program. We urged Directors of Graduate Studies, Program Directors and recruiters to tell us about competing offers that students were considering so that we could match or top those offers.

We will be debriefing with programs at this month's DGS meeting and in individual program meetings beyond to learn what worked well about the process and what aspects need improvement for next year. But I am pleased to announce that we successfully recruited more than 25 outstanding students from groups historically underrepresented in doctoral education, with supplements and fellowship designation as Centennial Scholars.

While there is always more work to do, I am proud of the progress we are making. I am also proud to say that the Laney Graduate School continues to be a recognized leader at Emory in the mission-critical goal to add greater diversity.

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Consistent with our mission, **we are also preparing our graduates for success through contemporary professional development and career planning resources and programming.**

Again this year, we offered a full range of professional development and career planning programming, from an enhanced [Grant Writing Program](#) schedule to the ever popular [Pathways Beyond the Professoriate](#) series. We added some new resources, such as free subscriptions for LGS students to participate in the [American Association for the Advancement of Science's Career Development Portal](#). We continued to offer programming with partners such as the Emory Center for Digital Scholarship in emerging areas like the digital humanities. Our English Language Support Program also expanded its professional development efforts for students and faculty by facilitating

workshops in partnership with CFDE, initiating a Peer Writing Group and convening a session at TATTO on strategies for the international teaching assistant as well as a TATTO Extension session on teaching international students.

This year, we also offered and sponsored student-centered programming aimed at improving student ability to communicate their research to broad audiences. I'll speak more about this programming in a few minutes, but first, I want to spend some time discussing some new professional development and career planning initiatives that got underway this year, and one that is coming to an end.

The Laney Graduate School is engaged in two grant-funded projects to help us understand the career pathways of our students and alumni, and, through a student and faculty centered initiative, embed new professional competencies in the curriculum of humanities doctoral training.

This year, Emory University joined 28 other universities selected by the Council of Graduate Schools to participate in the [PhD Career Pathways for Program Improvement Project](#), a national effort to gather data about the careers of PhD students and alumni in the humanities and STEM disciplines.

Funded by the National Science Foundation and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the multi-year project will collect career data via surveys developed by the Council of Graduate Schools in consultation with university leaders, funding agencies, disciplinary societies, researchers, and PhD students and alumni. The surveys will explore what types of careers current doctoral student seek, the career pathways of PhD alumni, and what skills are needed for graduates to be successful in a range of careers.

The PhD Career Pathways project will help us more acutely align Laney's professional development programming with evolving student interests, needs, and career outcomes. The project is an important step in our efforts to identify and understand the professional aspirations and career trajectories of our graduate students and alumni. We already know that our graduates are making valuable contributions in a wide range of careers – now we want to make sure that our programming is responsive to today's job market and that students receive the mentoring they need to be competitive and successful.

The surveys will be administered by Emory's Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness, and the Council of Graduate Schools will begin releasing aggregate summary data this summer or in the fall term.

In addition to broadening our survey environment, we also want to empower students and faculty to be change-makers in their programs - to innovate and create opportunities that bridge doctoral training and professional development. As I described in the dean's address last year, we want to create a culture of expectation and action – for both faculty and students – that prioritizes content, training and “ownership” for student professional development and career planning as part of the graduate experience.

A step in that direction, this year we launched the **Mellon Humanities PhD Interventions project**. The [Mellon-supported project](#) seeks to integrate new elements and experiences into

humanities doctoral training, and seeks to prepare students to address contemporary problems through forms accessible to the broader public.

The inaugural event of the project took place this past November when we were joined by Dr. Daniel Weiss for an illuminating discussion about his unique career pathway, from his time in one of the Big Four accounting firms, later as an academic and college president and to his work today, as president and CEO of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City.

And, with the guidance of faculty director Dr. Walter Melion, professor of Art History and director of the Fox Center for Humanistic Inquiry, as well as a faculty advisory committee, we shaped and recently announced new project-supported funding opportunities for graduate students, faculty and cross-program proposals.

- Students can apply for PDS awards to explore connections between their research and related work being done on or beyond campus in the public sphere, and to explore non-academic career pathways for humanists.
- Faculty can apply for course development grants to integrate public scholarship and/or new skill-sets such as digital scholarship and data visualization into existing or new PhD level courses.
- And faculty can also apply for funding to develop innovative, cross-program proposals and receive up to \$10,000 dollars per year for two years, in support of their joint project.

These initial funding opportunities are designed to promote change and innovation from the ground up. Within five years, we expect that significantly more humanities students will have opportunities, within the existing structure of their programs to do several things, including:

- Produce different forms of intellectual work such as web-based exhibits, writing op-eds, developing infographs and assembling lesson plans for non-college settings;
- Gain additional professional competences such as data visualization, budgeting, writing for broad audiences and digital publishing;
- And increase engagement with the public sphere through public scholarship programming and opportunities;

Needless to say, this project is ambitious, but there is already precedent at LGS for this level of engagement.

This year is the final year of **our NIH-funded BEST program**. The BEST program award aimed to develop and promote centralized, contemporary approaches to broaden career-exploration resources and professional development opportunities available to pre-doctoral and postdoctoral scientists and engineers. Essential to this process was a change in the culture and conversations around PhD training to support and encourage preparation for the variety of career opportunities available to PhD graduates. At the outset of the program, we set several goals:

- In the short-term, we wanted to broaden the potential career choices of pre-doctoral and postdoctoral trainees by providing exposure to careers outside of tenure-track academic positions, encouraging self-awareness and enabling preparation for a career path that fits an individual best;

- Over the medium term faculty were encouraged to engage more broadly in training pre-doctoral and postdoctoral candidates, preparing them for broad career options.
- And in the long-term, we wanted to identify best practices developed from this work and disseminate them to other institutions.

To date, 98 trainees have progressed through the program, and more than 65 faculty from across Emory and Georgia Tech have or have had trainees in the program. The program has been an incredible success and a model for experiential learning and career exploration. In the coming year, we will review the lessons learned from BEST and look for ways to incorporate best practices into new programming.

As we continue to grow our professional development programming, it is clear that current LGS staff capacity needs to expand to meet demand. We simply cannot do all that we want to do while still having room to evaluate and assess what is working, where we need more investment, and monitor national trends and emerging innovations in training and resources. We need dedicated leadership to guide our growth strategically and effectively in this area. I am pleased to share that we are engaged in a search for an Assistant Dean for Professional Development and Career Planning. This added capacity will help our programming become even more deliberate and will provide some more time for our Student Affairs team to have greater focus on issues of student progress and student wellbeing.

So far, we have received some outstanding applications, and I look forward to updating you as we get further along in that process.

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**In line with our mission, we also continue to collaborate with our partners in other schools and units at Emory and beyond to provide broadly based, excellent graduate education that promotes contemporary interdisciplinary graduate education.**

We all know that the complex challenges we face in the world today cannot be understood – and will not be solved – from the confines of a single discipline. To make good on our commitment and responsibility to create, teach and apply knowledge in the service of humanity, we must continue to push the boundaries of graduate education beyond departments, disciplines and schools.

The Laney Graduate School is the *keeper of interdisciplinarity* at Emory. As you heard from Executive Council chair Andra Gillespie, this year the Council reviewed a proposal to develop a Master’s program in Biomedical Imaging as well as a letter of intent to form a new master’s and doctoral program in Movement Science. Both would draw faculty from Emory College, the School of Medicine and Georgia Tech. The Council also reviewed a full proposal for a new doctoral program in Global Health and Development, again expected to draw a wide range of faculty from Emory College, the Rollins School of Public Health, the School of Medicine, several Emory research centers, the CDC and other international non-profits and health organizations.

Common to all of these requests is demonstrable faculty support and participation from across Emory, and recognition that to in order to gain a competitive advantage in today’s graduate research

and training environment, structural barriers to interdisciplinary research and scholarship must be appreciably reduced, if not reconsidered altogether.

One of our more innovative interdisciplinary approaches to graduate education in recent years is the Luce Foundation supported Communities of Practice project, a one year pilot that concludes this year. The project included international field practicums, but one of the more innovative aspects of the project was the “Global Skills Seminar.”

The seminar sought to cross two sets of boundaries that have imposed significant limitations on graduate education and development practice. The first of these is the boundary between the academy and world beyond its borders. The second is the boundary between “utilitarian” approaches to social engagement and approaches that recognize the importance of culture, identity and context for informing people’s everyday activities. By bringing together in a single seminar people who work across these boundaries, and by having participants confront and work through the barriers that normally divide them, the members of the seminar sought to develop new epistemologies of practice, new ways of learning and doing. During the fall of 2017, participants returned from abroad and met for a final semester, in a class that was devoted to exploring the implications of their experiences in and out of the classroom for the future of graduate education and development practice.

In this case and others, it is clear that student demand is increasing for interdisciplinary study and public scholarship opportunities. And we see that if the Laney Graduate School is the *keeper of interdisciplinarity*, then you, the graduate faculty, and our graduate students, are its *innovators*. We will look to you for new ideas, new approaches and new training paradigms. I encourage you to be bold, to push back on outdated models of training and push us forward in new directions. We see it happening in the proposals that come before the Executive Council, and I encourage you to keep that going.

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**This year was also another great year in our development and alumni relations efforts.**

We continue to increase philanthropic support from private donors and foundations, and we continue to find new points of engagement with alumni whose professional successes are inspirational to our students and emblematic of the great importance of graduate education for the research university.

- This year, we had more than 2,000 engagement points with more than 1,000 alumni and raised nearly \$5 million dollars with several more months left in the fiscal year.
- We have increased the Zebrowitz Award in Biomedical Engineering thanks to a generous gift of \$100,000, and we have a pledged \$1 million dollar estate gift to establish the Martin L. Levin Scholarship for summer training with the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research, a unit within the Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan.

- The Robert Tyre Jones Trust of New York gifted the entirety of its \$2.5 million dollar fund to the Jones Scholarship Fund in the Laney Graduate School, and we also received a pledged estate gift in the amount of \$700,000 dollars to support the Bobby Jones Program.
- A gift from Dr. Tom Macek, a 2000 graduate of the Molecular and Systems Pharmacology program, supports the MSP program with an award in honor of Dr. Ray Dingledine. And generous contributions have been made to create the Wilkinson Award in the Graduate Division of Biological and Biomedical Sciences, to honor former director Keith Wilkinson.
- The Allison Gilmore Fund was also created with gifts from graduates of the Business PhD Program to honor the extraordinary work of long-time graduate program administrator Allison Gilmore.
- With a generous gift from the Frost Foundation, this year we will expand the [Mellon Graduate Teaching Fellowship](#) to include the University of New Mexico: one scholar will be supported by Mellon funding and a second will be supported by Frost funding. We are excited to see what this opportunity brings and are also pleased to share that our fellowship liaison at UNM will be Dr. Manuel Montoya, an alum of the Laney Graduate School and Associate Professor of Global Structures and International Management at the University of New Mexico's Anderson School of Management. Dr. Kate Cartwright, Assistant Professor in the School of Public Administration at the University of New Mexico, will also work with the new MGTf recipients. Kate is also an LGS alum as well as a former MGTf recipient. Our LGS students will have plenty of support during their fellowship year.
- And finally, a few short weeks ago, LGS and East Lake Golf Club hosted the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Jones Legacy Golf Tournament. The tournament sold out all 72 playing spots, generating \$108,000 dollars in player support. We also had 6 corporate sponsors this year, up from 4 the year before.

As always, we ask that you keep us abreast of alumni successes so we can reach out and find creative ways to engage them in graduate education at Emory. And if you, your colleagues or your students want to learn more about our alumni relations efforts, or if you need support or have ideas about how to increase alumni engagement, please do reach out to our Development and Alumni Relations team. Katie Busch and Robin Harpak are always eager and ready to help, and I am happy to help as well.

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I would like to spend some of our remaining time on **priorities and programming we see on the horizon.**

Our highest immediate priority is stipend levels. Last year, we were able to move all remaining students to 12 months of stipend support. That was an important goal that took several years to realize. Our next goal is to raise the base stipend. Raising the base stipend level will help us be more competitive against our peers in recruiting top students. And improving the stipend level will provide current students with support that is above the estimated cost of living in Atlanta. We want



to do this as soon as we possibly can, and we have a great partner in Provost McBride who is as committed to this as we are. Our team is working hard to see what is possible and how soon.

We also want to continue to enhance our professional development and career planning programming. As I told you earlier, we are administering surveys to better understand student needs and career pathways, and we are searching for an Assistant Dean for Professional Development to add important capacity.

Another priority is to do more to support student storytelling and communications skills. In our advocacy efforts related to the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, we learned that student voices and stories are one of our strongest tools in relaying the importance of the research university and the graduate project to the public and to government leaders. Throughout the legislative process, Emory's Office of Communications and Public Affairs worked with us to connect graduate students to local and national media outlets, to Congressional representatives, and to local stakeholders with influence in Washington. There is no doubt that their stories made a transformative difference in those discussions and deliberations.

Students are eager to keep those discussions going. This spring, LGS sponsored an Atlanta workshop of the national ComSciCon program. ComSciCon is a workshop series organized by graduate students, for graduate students, focused on science communication skills. Anzar Abbas, an LGS doctoral student in Neuroscience, worked in partnership with graduate students at Georgia Tech to host a ComSciCon in Atlanta, which drew students from across the southeast.

This spring, we also hosted BME Lightning Talks where Biomedical Engineering faculty and students gave short presentations about their research to a professionally diverse audience at the Ansley Golf Club. The evening was hosted by one of our donors, and we plan to adapt this model to other disciplines and divisions, taking it to other settings.

And, of course, two weeks ago we hosted the annual 3MT competition, which challenges graduate students to present their research to a non-specialist judging panel in three minutes or less using only one slide. I will play the winning presentation in just a few moments.

The bottom line is that students who can communicate their research to a range of audiences make a difference. This is an area where you will see more LGS investment, including increased investment in LGS staff capacity to help tell those stories.

Before I move to close, I would also like to tell you about one more area of priority for next year. In 2019, the Laney Graduate School will celebrate its centennial. Our team is well underway in planning, and we are working on a yearlong schedule of programming that will include partner units across Emory – even our celebrations will be interdisciplinary, so to speak.

While celebration is in order, and we will certainly do plenty of that, the anniversary is also an opportunity to consider our aspirations and the bigger questions that higher education is being asked, such as:

- What is the role of the research university in contemporary society?
- What is the university of the future?

- How well are we adjusting to align with changes in student learning, student outcomes and the multidisciplinary interventions required to address today’s complex problems?
- What more can we do to improve access to and inclusion in graduate education?
- How can we ensure our graduates are well-prepared to address both privilege and responsibility coupled to education?

On January 2 of this year, New York Times columnist Frank Bruni posted an editorial titled *Higher Ed’s Low Moment*. A striking passage read,

At a time when a college degree is one of the surest harbingers of higher earning and better economic security, college itself is regarded with skepticism by many Americans and outright contempt by no small number of them...Repair is imperative, because the continued competitiveness of the U.S. economy depends on the skills of our workforce, the intellectual nimbleness of our citizens, the boldness of our scientific research and the genius of our inventions. Our colleges and universities are central to that. When they lose support, we all lose.

Mr. Bruni points out that part of the solution lies in a “simple and obvious thing that somehow fell by the wayside over recent decades” – that is, we need to explain ourselves better. So while we cannot assuage all anti-intellectual sentiment in our government and general populace, we can ask ourselves tough, existential questions about the future of the university, our capacity to adapt to new training models and our efforts to be more inclusive and accessible. We can also tell more of our own stories.

So, to show how we might explain ourselves better, and in keeping with recent tradition, I will play the winning 3MT presentation to conclude this year’s address. It is a fitting way to close this discussion, to make the point about accessibly telling our stories, and to re-focus attention on the excellent research that our graduate students are doing. The winning presentation this year comes from Osrin Forrest, a doctoral student in the Immunology and Molecular Pathogenesis program.

[Click here to watch video.](#)

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I am pleased to again report that the state of the Laney Graduate School is strong. Thank you for your time today, and thank you for all that you do to make this the graduate school of first choice for today’s brightest minds. See you at Commencement!