John G. Novotny, who retired in December 2024 as Marquette Law School's assistant dean for development, did much more than raise funds for Marquette University. At a retirement reception for Novotny in Eckstein Hall on December 17, 2024, Dean Joseph D. Kearney spoke to the vision and dedication that drove Novotny's influence on building up the Law School.

EMBODYING THE VISION OF JESUIT EDUCATION

BY JOSEPH D. KEARNEY


John Novotny

I want to begin by thanking Tim McMahon, as vice president, and his (our) various University Advancement colleagues for organizing this reception. We are all glad to salute John for his great work here at Marquette University.

Some of that work surrounds us, of course. John was an integral part of the fundraising for Eckstein Hall, working with Father Wild as president, the vice president for advancement at the time (Julie Tolan), Christine Wilczynski-Vogel, and me—along with any number of others. In a sense, John's decision to shift his primary attention to law school matters, in 2005, marked the beginning of that transformative campaign. For John saw the possibilities ahead here—or, more remarkably, "there," as in fact his first office at the Law School was in the now-demolished Legal Research Center. Whatever else one might say about that 1967 addition to Sensenbrenner Hall, it was not "noble, bold, harmonious, dramatic, confident, slightly willful, and, in a word, great," as has been said by some of Eckstein Hall.

Alas, there isn't time to provide a detailed account of John's role in how the Eckstein Hall campaign unfolded—let alone of his subsequent fundraising for the Law School. Nor can we detail here John's considerable other work to advance Marquette University, apart from the Law School, both during the decade before he joined us and on any number of other projects, big and small, *since* 2005.

Rather, I want to say something about John, in particular, and Jesuit education, more generally. John and I first met on February 1, 2005, as he was considering whether to be a candidate for UA's position of director of law school development. In an email the next day, thanking me for my time, John elected to provide "a brief aside," expanding on his own thinking about a recent letter that I had sent law students. He noted, "A key aspect of Jesuit education is to learn the critical habit of reflection in order to evoke a general restlessness with the status quo and, with it, a stirring to do more. It is good for all of us to be reminded periodically of our broader vocational calling and responsibilities."

Over the ensuing two decades, I would come to realize that these were not "asides" at all. John's embrace of Jesuit educational ideals has been essential to his and our success. I am reminded of part of a prayer (from Proverbs) that Pat Carey, now professor emeritus of theology, used to say at the beginning of meetings of a Marquette University committee that he chaired some years ago: "Without a vision, the people perish." The work of John and other colleagues may be known colloquially as "fundraising," but let no one doubt that words such as *development* and *advancement* come closer to capturing it. It is, in considerable part, about *vision*.

To so many of us at Marquette University, John, you *embody* Jesuit education, and you have been a teacher of its principles, even to those of us who already were the product of it. You have helped us advance and develop—to learn and grow. We might selfishly wish, as to the decision to retire, that you had a little bit *less* "restlessness with the status quo" (in your 2005 phrase), but, truly, our dominant emotion is gratitude.

John: Congratulations, kudos, and thank you. ■