

October 2025

Dear Loyal Leo,

I write this to you in my first semester as the University of La Verne's new Provost, or chief academic officer. I came to this position after working at public universities, where costs are offset by the State of California. It's hard to beat the CSU for access and affordability; on some campuses students pay less than half of the actual cost of their degrees. But there's a downside: for all its magic the public sector is still government work, characterized by red tape and an architectural emphasis on concrete.

So coming from there to here, the first thing I noticed was the beauty. The City of La Verne is at that optimal distance from the big city, adjacent to limitless possibilities but feeling like a college town. It's especially striking that the community and campus are so porous; the servers at Café Allegro know most of my colleagues, and the local barber and barista are both students. This summer I felt like I traded Ayn Rand for Normal Rockwell.

But then, with the start of the semester and the return of students, the vibe gets vibrant. It turns out this beautiful space that looks so exclusive actually isn't: educators and students of all backgrounds are sincerely welcomed, contribute right away, and belong. You have to wonder how ULV does it, that secret sauce that brings the serene, classical college experience within reach of so many, enriching us all.

The secret, of course, is our donors. For a surprising number of our students, net tuition approaches what they would pay at a CSU. Your gifts and bequests keep the campus gorgeous and the learning relevant, supporting cutting-edge faculty research, guest speakers and symposia, and of course, scholarships for students. Some are here paying, yes, less than half the cost of their degrees. And even for those at full price, the benefits of this cultural and socioeconomic diversity are enormous. Our graduates leave ULV unusually ready for a borderless, interconnected world, where they'll work with colleagues, clients, and customers who are nothing like themselves.

So, thank you. What I most love about this place, and the reason I hope to stay for a while, is its uncanny ability to bring this first-class education to the full spectrum of the people who want it. We do that in a thousand different ways, every day.

But mostly, it's because of you.

Ken O'Donnell
Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs

