Dear Alumni and Friends:

As we look forward to our upcoming commencement ceremonies, we of course think of the local and national economic condition and how easy or difficult it will be for our graduates to secure jobs.

The School of Education and Social Services consistently takes advantage of opportunities to place students in professional, career-related activities and internships that enhance learning and develop workplace skills—valuable outcomes at any time, but ones especially prized in the current hiring market.

Social Work Internships

One of our instructors in the Master of Social Work Program gives insight into the challenges and rewards of the internship experience. She reflects on her own internship experience as a Saint Leo undergraduate student and the changes that it brought to the child welfare agency where she served. Before joining the faculty, Diane Scotland-Coogan ’08 earned her M.S.W. and became a Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW).

“Internships are a gift to the intern, and a good intern is a gift to the internship placement.

“Even though my internship time with this agency was relatively short, approximately one semester, the experience I gained during that time was invaluable. I found if you truly engage in your placement, take every opportunity to learn, and seek areas in which you can make a difference, the rewards are immeasurable. I started a foster parent support group to assist foster parents in becoming more educated about the children in their households, and to connect with other families to find support during difficult times. This group was so successful that even though it is years later, the group is still active and retains the same structure that I developed. You can make a difference and impact your environment in a positive way. I would tell the executive director of the agency, ‘I am the gas, and you are the
brakes.’ By this I mean I ran many ideas by her, not all of which were put into place, but the effort was acknowledged. If you see a need, ask a lot of questions, put an idea together, and present it. You never know whom you may be serving, whose life you may be impacting, and what you will learn on your journey.”

Education Resources

The Alumni Teacher Program continues the traditions of Saint Leo University. True to the core values of Saint Leo, we design programs to help our alumni teachers grow in their profession through workshops that are tailored to their needs and that provide the opportunity to rekindle that sense of community with Saint Leo. At each monthly meeting, we have a light dinner and a guest speaker who targets resources about best practices that new teachers can use. It is a part of SLU’s commitment to ensure their first years of teaching are a success. Our program has garnered many positive comments since its beginnings last year. Meredith Joseph ’11, now a teacher at Centennial Middle, stated the Alumni Teacher Program “is a valuable resource that I look forward to each month” and she “always leaves with inspiration and ideas.”

Learning that the Pasco County (FL) School District would not be hosting an orientation program for its new teachers, we held a highly successful new teacher “boot camp” in August for our graduates. The comments from our grads indicated that the camp helped to answer questions they had about the district and left them feeling better prepared.

Perhaps the best description of our program comes from Christopher Kent ’09, a teacher at Pasco Elementary School, who wrote “the Alumni Teacher program is a great resource! The programs that are presented really help me incorporate new methods and ideas into my teaching. We discuss topics ranging from new trends in education to curriculum changes to legislative and administrative issues. We have members/alumni from a variety of schools and districts, and it is really an insightful experience to discuss topics from the various viewpoints our members can offer. We learned to be lifelong learners at Saint Leo, and it’s awesome that this program supports us and brings that goal to life.” The Alumni Teacher Program is committed to supporting Saint Leo’s core values of excellence
and personal development.

**Criminal Justice**

Tim Powers, a lead contract faculty member in criminal justice, says that within law enforcement, “the degree is quickly becoming a prerequisite to employment and advancement within the field. As a lieutenant with the Pasco (County) Sheriff’s Department, I have served in a variety of roles, the most recent as a platoon commander.

During a storied career in law enforcement, I have worked as a patrol person, detective (in property, homicide, and vice and narcotics), SWAT Team member, Honor Guard member, Terrorism Task Force member, and Special Operations division commander (SWAT, Marine Unit, K-9 Unit, Aviation Unit, Street Crimes, Selective Traffic Enforcement, Motor Unit and Hostage Negotiators). Many of these opportunities were afforded as a result of degrees achieved from Saint Leo University (B.A. ’01, M.S. ’08). Opportunity is but a college degree away!”

Christina Sereni-Massinger, former judge and currently a full-time faculty member in our Criminal Justice Department, states that careers in criminal justice are unlimited and encompass both the private and public sectors. Graduates in criminal justice excel in such professions as: attorneys, judges, police, correctional or probation officers, wardens, paralegals, victim’s rights counselors, Secret Service agents, CIA agents, FBI agents, Drug Enforcement Agency employees, deputy U.S. marshals, customs agents, crime analysts, sheriffs, private investigators, police chiefs, administrators, and forensic analysts.

“Professionals who choose a career in criminal justice are typically hard-working, self-motivated, quick-thinking individuals who have a high tolerance for stressful situations, have the desire to help others, are good communicators, have a strong sense of right and wrong, and possess a proficient knowledge of the law.

“Criminal justice professionals are capable of working with criminals, victims, court personnel, and lay people. Their skills allow them to maintain peace in their communities, actively seek justice, assist victims and establish societal order through the law.”
I am proud of the commitment of our faculty to advise students and acquaint them with career opportunities in their fields of study. Our internship placements are well selected and organized to provide the learning experiences necessary for employment and success after graduation. Our president, Dr. Arthur F. Kirk, Jr., has often stated at Saint Leo commencement ceremonies that our students are charged with doing well and doing good. I agree and can see the results of this rigorous, liberal arts education in the alumni who frequently come back to thank us as they share their success stories.

Carol G. Walker, Ph.D.
Dean, School of Education and Social Services