



Welcome Back!

Despite weather-related challenges for some of you, our students – both new and returning – enjoyed a welcoming and seamless start to the new academic year. Thank you for a job well done. Your efforts to ensure everyone’s safety in the aftermath of an earthquake, hurricane, and flooding were exemplary. Nevertheless, we extend our thoughts to all of our staff and faculty who were affected by these events. The impact of such loss on our lives is devastating. The effects of flooding in the Bloomsburg area were especially severe, resulting in the closure of that campus for the remainder of this week. I ask that you keep all of our staff and faculty who were affected in your thoughts. I know all of us are willing to continue doing what we can to assist them, as we have been the past several days.

All indications are that our combined commitment to spare our students the full financial impact of our loss of more than \$90 million in state funding worked. Early enrollment figures show levels close to last year, which was our best ever. Nearly 120,000 students are eager to expand their knowledge and accept new challenges. I know you will do your best to make certain they do.

Our demonstrated ability to work together gives me confidence that we will be able to accomplish our key goals over the next year. We have the ability to continue as good stewards of the public’s funds by ensuring that the academic programs we build and the services we provide reflect the best return on the Commonwealth’s investment in us. To that end, I pledge to establish collaborative models with you that ensure the students we recruit have every opportunity to succeed. My priorities are:

- Working more closely with the K-12 system to define college readiness and to implement appropriate assessment tools and remediation options. We can further assist students and their families throughout the college search process while making it easier to apply for admission and expanding the availability of financial aid.
- Working more closely with each other in creating and delivering our academic programs. As part of a larger System, PASSHE universities have the special ability to share resources more effectively and efficiently to enhance the quality of education our students receive and to expand students’ learning opportunities and prospects for success. We can and should work together to enhance existing academic programs and create new ones, utilizing expertise across departments and across universities. We must capitalize on technology to realize its full potential for increasing the quality of the educational experiences of our students.

- Working more closely to ensure that our students are able to finish what they start, whether it be a single class needed to enhance their career development or an advanced degree. We can do so by completing our work on transfer agreements; by expanding the number of two-year degrees, certificate programs and college readiness programs available in underserved areas; and by expanding the recruitment of returning adult students and providing them with the programs they deserve and need, delivered through flexible schedules along with appropriate support services.

I also look forward to assuring that we have a smooth transition in leadership at five of our universities. Dr. Michael Fiorentino begins his tenure as President of Lock Haven University. During the coming year, we will be conducting presidential searches at Edinboro, East Stroudsburg, Indiana University of Pennsylvania, and Slippery Rock.

The economic situation will be an ongoing challenge. Each of our campuses and the Office of the Chancellor continue to identify and implement ways to be more cost effective, including workforce realignments, to assure that we are as flexible and responsive to the needs of our students as we can be. We are continuously reviewing our academic offerings, introducing new approaches to content delivery, and exploring ways to expand our collaborative efforts. And, as you no doubt are aware, we continue to meet with our various unions in an attempt to achieve new collective bargaining agreements. Through the Commonwealth and our own efforts we have reached agreement on a new four-year contract with AFSCME that will result in significant savings in healthcare costs while helping to enhance workforce efficiency and preserve jobs. I would like to personally thank everyone who was involved in those successful discussions and am hopeful we will achieve similar success with each of our other unions.

We continue to meet with our other bargaining units with a focus on identifying significant cost savings and more flexible and creative work rules.

I look forward to continuing to work with you in all areas to help ensure our students' success. I wish you all a wonderful fall semester.

All the best,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be the initials 'JL' or similar, written in a cursive style.