Provost Nick Jones’ remarks to the Board of Trustees  
Friday, July 21, 2017

Penn State Executive Vice President and Provost Nicholas P. Jones delivered his official Provost's Report on July 21, 2017, during the Board of Trustees meeting at Penn State Harrisburg. Following is a transcript of his remarks.

Good afternoon. It’s nice to be with you all for our summer Board of Trustees meeting, which is traditionally held at one of Penn State’s Commonwealth Campuses.

I’m delighted that this year’s summer meeting is being held at Penn State Harrisburg, a thriving campus about which you will hear even more from Chancellor Kulkarni immediately after my remarks.

Today I’ll be talking a bit about our campuses and how they carry out our mission of teaching, research, and service – both individually and collaboratively.

Before delivering my official report, however, I would like to take a moment to welcome two new Commonwealth Campus chancellors – one who started in her role a few weeks ago, and another who will begin serving in a few days.

On June 1st, Jackie Edmondson, who had been Penn State’s associate vice president and associate dean for Undergraduate Education, assumed the role of chancellor and chief academic officer at our Greater Allegheny campus. Jackie brings tremendous knowledge of the University to this position, along with her experience as an accomplished leader in program and curriculum development, and general education.
Also, effective August 1st, Darcy Medica, director of academic affairs at Penn State Schuylkill, will begin serving as the campus's interim chancellor. She will assume the leadership role following the appointment of Kelly Austin, current chancellor, who was named associate vice president for administration in the Office of the Vice President for Commonwealth Campuses. Darcy will serve in the interim role while a nationwide search for Kelly’s replacement progresses.

We are fortunate to have professionals at Penn State who are highly prepared for and eager to step up and serve in such vital roles. Please join me now in congratulating Jackie, Darcy, and Kelly, and thanking them for their service to our University.

As a public research university that boasts a large and diverse community of students, faculty, and staff, Penn State is proud to serve the Commonwealth across its 24 physical campuses, as well as through our online World Campus.

As we often say, Penn State is “One University, Geographically Distributed.” From this map, you can see the accuracy of that description.

You undoubtedly have heard of – and maybe even read – the Charles Dickens novel, “A Tale of Two Cities.”

Well, Penn State is “A Tale of 24 Campuses.” And there is no book that you can pick up or download to read the complete story, because it is one that continues to evolve and grow.

I have mentioned before the many benefits of Penn State's unique structure, one of which is that it provides for an accessible Penn State education, with choices to fit most personal situations, preferences, and challenges. Our campuses, which vary in size and program portfolios, advance the University’s mission and are key parts of their broader communities. They enable opportunities and outcomes that other institutions cannot.
Dr. Madlyn Hanes, our Vice President for Commonwealth Campuses and Executive Chancellor, continues to demonstrate exceptional leadership in these areas, and we are grateful for her commitment and dedication to the campuses’ success. Thank you, Madlyn.

Ultimately, Penn State’s structure is intrinsic to our role as the Commonwealth’s land-grant institution, and we continue to take pride in and maximize the benefits of our unified multi-campus approach.

And so, in preparing for this week’s meeting here in Harrisburg, I started thinking more about Penn State’s campuses and the results they engender.

When we titled our University-wide strategic plan “Our Commitment to Impact,” implicit was the acknowledgment that individuals at all of our campuses are making impacts through teaching, research, and service.

As many of you may know, I visit each campus at least once during each academic year, typically during the spring semester. I meet with our chancellors, faculty, staff, and students to engage with them directly and learn more about the interests and needs of our key stakeholders beyond our administrative hub in University Park.

And let me tell you, I learn a LOT from these visits.

What is especially interesting is how different some of our campuses are – from their unique histories to how they operate today. And yet, no matter how contrasting their missions, programs, or demographics may be, the campuses are still clearly part of one, united Penn State.

I would love to reveal this to you by telling “A Tale of 24 Campuses,” but I know that might get a bit lengthy.
So, instead, I will share with you a brief tale about only three of them: Harrisburg, where we are today, and Carlisle and Hershey, nearby locations that are home to the Dickinson School of Law and the College of Medicine, respectively.

All of them are unique in many ways, but all also are vital pieces of what makes us “The Pennsylvania State University.”

I know Chancellor Kulkarni will have much more to say about Penn State Harrisburg but, suffice it to say, the story of this campus is one of transformation, evolution, and growth.

In 1996, the University spent one dollar to buy the north complex of the Olmsted Air Force base, which was being decommissioned, to build a campus here. Pennsylvania Governor William Scranton and University President Eric Walker saw many benefits in the plan, among them that the plan would create new jobs and lessen the negative impact of the base closure on the local economy,

Penn State Harrisburg – then called the Capitol Campus – was established as a graduate school and upper division center for students who could transfer from other Penn State campuses and other institutions as juniors or seniors. It originally enrolled 183 students, including 18 undergraduates, in just a few majors, and employed eight faculty members.

Fast-forward 50 years. Today, Penn State Harrisburg enrolls more than 5,000 students and offers more than 65 associate, bachelor’s, master’s, and doctoral degree programs. Its proximity to the state capital and to a vibrant hub of commerce and industry affords students many opportunities for involvement in community service, internships, fellowships, and mentoring programs – all experiences that extend learning beyond the classroom.

Further testament to the strength of a Penn State Harrisburg education is the success of
As Chancellor of Penn State Harrisburg since 2010, Mukund Kulkarni is an exceptional leader who continues to advance the mission of this campus. Thank you, Mukund.

Founded in 1834, The Dickinson School of Law is the oldest law school in Pennsylvania and the fifth oldest in the country. Over the years, its graduates have included the nation's finest attorneys, judges, government and corporate leaders, and legal educators.

Dickinson Law’s historic home underwent a thorough renovation and modernization project designed to bring together students, staff, and faculty on a daily basis.

Dickinson Law also completed significant upgrades to its clinic building located only one block from the courthouse in downtown Carlisle. The clinic building serves as the law office from which its students provide service to members of the community. The School’s merger with Penn State in 1997 expanded its reputation, network, and joint degree programs — further solidifying Dickinson Law’s legacy as an innovative leader in experiential education.

Incidentally, Dickinson Law recently became a separately accredited school, distinguishing Penn State nationally as one of few universities with not one but two law schools. Both have a staunch commitment to excellence and serve students with complementary but sometimes diverse aspirations. This development is yet another example of Penn State evolving to better serve the citizens of the Commonwealth.

Dean Gary Gildin remains a driving force behind the exciting changes and evolutions at Dickinson Law. Thank you, Gary.

In 1963, the M.S. Hershey Foundation offered $50 million to Penn State to establish a medical school in Hershey. With this grant and $21.3 million from the U.S. Public Health
Service, the University built a medical school, research center, and teaching hospital — what is now the Penn State Health Milton S. Hershey Medical Center.

The University broke ground in 1966, and the Penn State College of Medicine opened its doors to students in 1967. The Medical Center accepted its first patients in 1970. Since 1970, the campus has grown from 318 acres to 550 acres. Many additions have been made to the academic and patient care facilities, reflecting the steady increase in patient demand for services and the need to expand research and teaching programs.

Beyond the many degree programs now offered in the College of Medicine, students from the College of Nursing rotate through the Medical Center for clinical courses, and students from other Penn State health-related programs also come to Hershey for their clinical experiences.

As Dean of the College of Medicine, Chief Executive Officer of Penn State Health, and Senior Vice President for Health Affairs, Craig Hillemeier is elevating Penn State’s impact in Hershey and across the Commonwealth. Thank you, Craig, for all you do.

So, clearly, in Harrisburg, Carlisle, and Hershey, we have members of the Penn State family who are very different in myriad ways, and yet they are still related. They’re part of the whole.

When we say, “We Are Penn State,” all three get to shout it just as loudly and proudly.

But how do these seemingly disparate pieces fit together?

For starters, they are united by our tripartite mission of teaching, research, and service. They also share the University’s six core institutional values:

Integrity.
Respect.
Responsibility.
Discovery.
Excellence.
Community.

Ultimately, all three are part of an institutional fabric that covers the Commonwealth and represents a huge economic engine for the communities these campuses call home.

Beyond all of that, however, are the intersections – the ways in which these campuses and their key stakeholders support each other and work together to foster important outcomes.

The close proximity of Penn State Harrisburg, the College of Medicine and Dickinson Law enables unique opportunities for collaboration, including joint educational programs and interdisciplinary studies and research.

For example, Dickinson Law and Penn State Harrisburg offer cooperative programs leading to the degrees of Juris Doctor (J.D.), granted by Dickinson Law, and either the Master of Business Administration or Master of Public Administration, granted by Penn State Harrisburg. These concurrent degree opportunities enable students to earn both a law degree and a professional degree in business.

But that's not all. The College of Medicine and Penn State Harrisburg also offer cooperative programs leading to the degrees of doctor of philosophy, granted by the College of Medicine, and the Master of Business Administration or the Master of Science in Information Systems, granted by Penn State Harrisburg. These concurrent degree opportunities enable students to complete a doctorate in biomedical sciences and a professional master's degree in business administration.

These degree program offerings across the Capital Region campuses reveal the power of academic collaboration to benefit students with broad career aspirations.
This region is also a hub for talent and innovation, with ample resources in business, medicine, law, and many other fields. Invent Penn State, our Commonwealth-wide initiative to spur economic development, job creation, and student career success, is an excellent example of this.

In February of 2016, President Barron joined representatives from the College of Medicine, Dickinson Law, Penn State Harrisburg and this region’s business community to celebrate the awarding of a $50,000 SEED grant from Invent Penn State. It was one of only six SEED grants awarded, but it was unique in that it involved these three Penn State entities—all contributing to innovation and entrepreneurship in the Capital Region.

With the awarding of four more grants last month, we now have a total of 17 innovation hubs, all built upon partnerships with local community organizations and local industry to meet the needs of their unique business startup ecosystems. These include hubs here in Harrisburg and our nearby campuses in York and Mont Alto.

Another example worth noting: When we were holding our Strategic Planning forums this past spring, Penn State Harrisburg offered to host the forum related to “Enhancing Health,” one of the plan’s five thematic priorities. We could have held that event in Hershey, but Penn State Harrisburg and Chancellor Kulkarni saw it as an opportunity for broad engagement about the topics of personal and community health in the Commonwealth.

These collaborative endeavors and others show how campuses as seemingly different as those in Harrisburg, Carlisle, and Hershey, among others, can join forces as part of Penn State to make great things happen.

Our Commonwealth Campuses are a large and dynamic part of the University, serving more than 31,000 students who are vital to our integrated Penn State structure. They are making a difference in their communities and helping the University to deliver on the
ambitious goals articulated in our strategic plan. They are also working collaboratively to have even bigger impacts.

We will continue to leverage our unique structure — and to tell our ever-evolving “Tale of 24 Campuses” — to meet our obligations regarding educational access and affordability and fulfill Penn State’s land-grant mission.

Thank you for your time today.