Penn State Executive Vice President and Provost Nick Jones was one of several speakers during a gala celebrating the 60th anniversary of Penn State Berks. Following is a transcript of his remarks from the event at the Doubletree Hotel in Reading, Pa.

Thank you, President Barron, and good evening everyone.

I am honored to join you tonight in celebrating the 60th anniversary of Penn State Berks.

I was fortunate to be here in February to help kick off this yearlong celebration.

I said at the time that it seemed appropriate the event was being held on Valentine’s Day.

Why? Because so many people have a lot of love for this specific institution of higher learning.

From current faculty, staff, and students to alumni, donors, and community members, countless individuals have helped Penn State Berks grow and thrive in the past six decades.

Tonight, we are here to show our collective love for Penn State Berks.

We are celebrating its importance over time and spotlighting how vital this campus and its people are today.
Clearly, Penn State Berks has grown in stature and significance during the past 60 years.

When this campus opened on July 1st of 1958, it enrolled about 200 students. Today, Berks is home to nearly 3,000 learners.

Things were a bit different then, during a period of transformative change in America.

NASA was created in 1958, and the first Boeing 707 passenger flight took to the air that year.

Back then, you needed only 25 cents to buy a gallon of gas.

And the average cost of a new house in this country was $12,000. Yes, you heard me right: Twelve Thousand Dollars.

That sounds fantastic, doesn’t it?

Also in 1958: Only two years after millions of people watched Elvis Presley perform on “The Ed Sullivan Show,” the iconic, hip-swiveling musician joined the U.S. Army.

Elvis was still “The King.”

But in 1958, he was a Sergeant, too, serving this country.

There is one thing that has not changed during the past 60 years, however – and it’s a great thing.
From then to now, this institution and its people have served Berks County and surrounding communities proudly and exceptionally well.

Our University’s mission is to educate students from around the world, and to support individuals and communities through integrated programs of teaching, research, and service.

At Penn State Berks, staunch support of that mission is evident every day.

The award-winning faculty pride themselves on their commitment to teaching, and to innovative research in service to their disciplines, profession, and society.

Berks staff members are highly dedicated to impactful work that enables people to succeed across the institution.

As for Berks students: Learners here are engaged in meaningful endeavors both in and out of the classroom.

Consider just a few activities that occurred this semester.

The campus Office of Academic Affairs staged an event called “Rapid-Fire Research Talks,” during which faculty in engineering, science, humanities, and the arts delivered five-minute presentations describing their research to members of the public.

In September, two Berks professors traveled nearly 4,500 miles to share their expertise on service learning with faculty at the University of Split in Croatia.
And in October, faculty hosted a “Math and Science Day” for local elementary school students, many of whom learned for the first time about the important work done in those fields.

Meanwhile, Berks students thoughtfully volunteered their time throughout the semester. They prepared and served dinner at Opportunity House, the Reading emergency shelter, and they visited with residents at Country Meadows, a local retirement community.

Back in August, Berks students, faculty, staff, and community volunteers worked together on the official Penn State Berks Day of Service.

A few weeks later, they joined forces again on Perkins Plaza to commemorate Unity Day, an annual event that brings everyone together to celebrate diversity and inclusion.

These stories and others reveal how Penn State Berks embodies the best of our University.

Ultimately, it’s about the people.

Berks’ success is testimony to the efforts of everyone who has been or currently is a part of this community.

Past and present support of Penn State Berks through philanthropy, service, and other means has enabled many positive results and achievements.

As our University’s Provost, I could not be prouder of everyone at Berks who works hard to ensure they make a positive impact, both on campus and in the community.
I thank you all for your service and commitment, as well as those who could not be here today to celebrate with us.

Without you, there would be no Penn State Berks … and no celebrations like this one.

Congratulations on 60 wonderful years, and I look forward to celebrating many more successful years with you. Thank you.