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President's Monthly Report to Campus March 2018

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PRESIDENT'S MONTHLY REPORT TO CAMPUS

March 2018

Dear Colleagues,

As the semester is in full swing and quite busy for all, I am thankful for the warmer temperatures, sunshine, and daylight at 5 p.m. I know some of you were able to enjoy Ski Day, at least for a few hours as I did, and found that the students were having a great time. Speaking of skiing, it was great to welcome back our PSU student and Olympian, Freydis Einarsdottir, from the games in PyeongChang.

I appreciate that many of you attended the February 21 Town Hall meeting where we shared updates on building renovations, eligible faculty SIP options, the Hage pub, a revised university [organizational chart](#), and shared (cross-system) initiatives, to name a few. We introduced proposed academic calendar changes and an alternate scheduling model. We updated the campus on enrollments, Student Affairs reorganization, and the accomplishments of the Retention and Persistence Working Group. For those of you who missed it, a video recording and presentation can be found on the [PSU Vision page](#). We plan to hold the next Town Hall meeting in April. More details will follow.

As a reminder of the five overarching objectives that I introduced in my last report, this report is organized according to them: (1) Movement to a flatter, integrated, Cluster-based organizational structure and implementation of the Four Tools, (2) Retention and Persistence, (3) Sustainability/Thriving financially, academically, and reputationally, (4) Recruitment and Enrollment, and (5) Equipping our students to lead and thrive in the twenty-first century global economy. These objectives are to be considered in every aspect of what we do to achieve our shared Integrated Cluster vision.

Movement to a flatter, integrated Cluster-based organizational structure and implementation of the Four Tools

We kicked off the new calendar year by moving forward to implement a variety of items that we have been discussing over the last two years. This includes putting into place a scheduling format for next year that will allow us to run simultaneously with three- and four-credit courses. With the help of the Curriculum Committee last summer and the Transition Leadership Team (TLT) working with cabinet this month, we have developed a schedule that will allow us to test and ultimately implement a scheduling format that is flexible and accommodates class time intervals as short as 50 minutes and as long as half a day. We haven't worked out a common period yet, as the goal right now is just to be able to handle three- and four-credit courses that were approved at the faculty meeting with

minimum disruption. But we will learn lessons from this transitional course-scheduling model that should enable all of us to work together and arrive at an optimum scheduling format that is flexible and has a multi-hour common period(s).

As we discussed in the last Town Hall meeting, after much input and discussion with individual programs and addressing all the concerns, we are shifting the schedule forward next year by one week. I apologize that there has not been time for discussion in faculty meeting about this shift, but with the closure on the afternoon of the last faculty meeting and the concern expressed by many faculty and programs that we lock the dates, we were left with little option but to move forward now or delay another year. Given all the input that we have received from students and parents, directly and indirectly, I decided it was best to move ahead for this year.

That said, this is not much different than the scheduled start of the fall semester when I arrived, in which classes met the week before Labor Day. The most unusual component of this schedule is the Winterim period, but that follows the same schedule UNH has been utilizing successfully for several years. It now allows for a kick-off set of assignments before the holiday break and no on-campus classes until after New Years. We have also addressed the needs of ETC, which currently is performed when the students are not on campus. This change will allow students to attend as part of the kickoff of the spring semester, and we believe this can be done in a synergistic manner with the start of classes.

Also noted in the Town Hall and discussed over the last two years, we have decided to lift the partial ban on fraternities and sororities. There are many reasons for this, including the existence of underground fraternities, existing successful sororities, retention, recruiting, the difficulty in exercising any kind of restraint on off-campus drinking, our rural setting, our relationship with alumni, and the sense of community that we need to develop. A working group is active on the reinstatement process and is making sure that the positive aspects of fraternities and sororities are reinforced, and the negative aspects reduced or eliminated.

In the Town Hall, we talked about Cluster leaders. However, as a result of feedback and the different evolution of Clusters, we have decided to ask the Clusters, and the library, at this point to put forth a representative for the Deans Council. The deans will be outlining the responsibilities but it shouldn't be too time consuming. Because I unfortunately cannot be at the faculty meeting this Wednesday, and I am sure that this will be a lively discussion, I wanted to share what I am thinking of for a framework moving forward in setting up the Cluster Leadership Team, and its relationship to both work plan development and promotion and tenure. These are just my thoughts and the following (in italics) will be a blog post, open for discussion with the new provost playing a key role:

The framework for Cluster leadership is the Cluster Leadership Team and one or two Cluster leaders, who are active members of the Cluster Leadership Team. These Cluster leaders are team leaders and

they are different from chairs and deans in that their role is to lead the Cluster Leadership Team in a coordinating Cluster strategy and ultimately are responsible for the day-to-day operational and administrative duties of the Cluster (with considerable support from administrative assistants, and budget and finance, etc.). That does not mean they do everything, only that they lead the joint efforts in strategy and operations. Various groups/individuals within the Cluster can and should take on responsibilities in both areas (operations and strategy) where appropriate.

There has been a great deal of discussion about timecards, work plans, reporting, and promotion and tenure within this environment. The deans have suggested a framework, but the final form in each of these areas should be the product of a shared perspective (and joint discussions) between faculty, staff, and the Provost's Office. Time cards should be handled by one of the cluster team leaders as part of their operational responsibilities. Work plans (both faculty and staff) should reflect not only individual faculty/staff goals but be an implementation of the collective strategy(ies) of the Cluster. It is suggested that these work plans be reviewed by the Cluster Leadership Team and the Provost Office and feedback provided both when the work plans are submitted and at the end of the year (this includes the Cluster Leadership Team and team leaders). Given the variety of duties and opportunities in this new Cluster structure, it is suggested that there be some flexibility in faculty assignments (not a rigid breakdown on teaching, research, service) to match the roles they are playing throughout the year. In fact, it is recommended that these areas of faculty responsibility (teaching, research, and service) be viewed more from an integrated perspective around the five themes instead of separate categories. For promotion and tenure, it is suggested that we move to a process where the first review is held at the Cluster level by a committee made up of representatives from the discipline, from other Cluster areas, and one representative from outside the Cluster (particularly in areas in which the faculty member has partnered). After that review it is suggested that the Cluster team leaders send the review results and recommendations to the Provost Office, where there would be a University-wide committee (with representation across the University) review and recommendation. The provost and president would then review and pass recommendations on to the trustees, who make the final decision (as is done currently). It is suggested that some preliminary review and advisement occur at the two-year level, and the four-year point if needed. Then at the six-year period, we would typically have the final review (for tenure). Promotion would follow the same process, but of course there would not be any interim reviews normally.

These entire paragraphs are just preliminary and I am hoping that the faculty will take up these discussions in the future, much the way administrative assistants are doing so currently with Tracy Claybaugh. I just thought it might help to get some thoughts out on the table as a starting point. The Provost Office has supplied more details in certain areas, but this is a framework for discussion. This is in contrast to the calendar change, which has been frozen for next year (but the topic is certainly open for discussion and hopefully we will learn some things from our experiences this coming year). Again, my apologies for not being able to join you, but I think getting the story out about the path we are all on at PSU is important for our long-term success.

As a reminder regarding the University Reinvention Initiative (URI), proposals for innovative ideas that further the Integrated Cluster vision are due by March 30, 2018. The process for submitting your ideas has been streamlined with a simplified URI ideas form. The form, along with helpful data resources, can be found on the URI site [here](#). In April, the deans will review all submissions to identify viable proposals that can be further developed for action and implementation. Cross-Cluster representatives, Cluster and program leaders, faculty, and staff will then engage in refining proposals, developing curricular initiatives, identifying additional cross-Cluster and co-curricular opportunities, and prioritizing action steps based on impact and resources available for implementation. The deans will share recommendations and provide feedback to faculty and cabinet by mid-May. Throughout the summer, we will continue to enhance ideas and determine action steps. Collaboration is key as faculty and staff continue to plan innovative strategies that support University goals. The administration will continue to work collaboratively with Clusters and programs as we go through this phase of the process.

The provost/vice-president of academic affairs search continues with three campus interviews on March 5, 12, and 14. Campus-wide presentations will take place from 3–4:30 p.m. in Merrill Place Room B. The presentations will be recorded for those unable to attend; recordings will be shared by e-mail when available along with a survey to collect feedback. The name and biography of each candidate will be provided on the day of the presentation.

Recruitment and Enrollment

In Undergraduate Recruitment, total applications for fall 2018 exceeded 6,000. Although Admissions has been experiencing some application declines throughout a few of our out-of-state Northeast and mid-Atlantic recruitment regions, we are up 130 applications in-state year-to-date. Going into the last week in February, the number of admission offers were ahead of last year, 4,571 to 4,473, and deposits were flat at 250. As for upcoming recruitment event dates, the Accepted Students Day events are scheduled for **Friday, April 6; Monday, April 16; Friday, April 20; and Friday, April 27**. The Panther for a Day visit program is now running, through which an admitted student can visit and shadow a current PSU student. At R+30, the number of Undergraduate students enrolled was 3,869 compared to 3,822, which represents a continued upward trend.

Marketing Communications and Creative Services's guerilla marketing campaign at area ski resorts has had good results, including the launch of the PSU Basecamp at Waterville Valley Resort, where PSU Admissions representatives provide information to students and families especially during vacation weeks with on-site application reviews. Current Freestyle and Snowboarding club students are wearing PSU-branded jackets (designed in partnership with the Student Design Collaborative and alumni working in the ski industry) and sharing their PSU stories with prospective students, their parents, community members, and alumni at Waterville Valley and other area resorts. Digital advertising, TV spots on Boston channel WLVI, and I-93 billboards have promoted the initiative, which has earned positive national media coverage. Hours of operation have been Friday and Saturday, 11

a.m.—7 p.m.; Sunday 9 a.m.—5 p.m.; and during the vacation weeks (Feb. 19—23 and Feb. 26—March 3).

In Graduate Recruitment, comparing spring semester to last year's spring semester, applications going into the end of February were 154 compared to 92, admission offers were up 5 percent, and spring registrations were 1,066 compared to 761. At R+30, the number of matriculated Graduate students was 931 compared to 851 last year, which represents an upward trend not seen in many years.

In Financial Aid, the team, along with Student Account Services and Finance, continues to respond to requests from current students for additional resources in an effort to reduce financial barriers faced all. This is an initiative that we are looking to now expand to our newly-recruited students for fall 2018. With the preferred deadline to submit a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) of March 1, the Financial Aid team begins developing and sending financial aid packages to returning students. Returning students looking to continue to receive federal financial aid assistance must refile their FAFSA.

In Student Success advising, coaches are now housed in Enrollment Management along with undergraduate and graduate Admissions and Financial Aid. They are working to move their role away from following a traditional advising model to a more holistic care model, where they can advise beyond the topics of course registration planning and early alert response during a new student's first year and provide coaching on other topics such as financial well-being, career preparation, and student engagement. An overall objective is to gain the necessary knowledge and forge the necessary cross-campus partnerships to shift the paradigm of serving a student in a transactional manner.

Retention and Persistence

Much has been done toward helping students stay in school and persist until graduation. The Retention and Persistence Working Group (RPWG) shared an update on retention and persistence efforts with the entire campus on February 22. In brief, there is greater integration and collaboration of efforts across the University aimed at helping connect students to faculty, staff, and other students. The student success coaches, Residential Life, Financial Aid, the registrar, Athletics, and the Frost House team meet as the "boots on the ground" retention committee to discuss and resolve individual cases and develop campaigns for immediate impact. The Center for Transformation is working with faculty and staff across campus to build professional development workshops and provide other opportunities to better engage students in both on- and off-campus experiential learning opportunities. The student academic advocate, the dean of students, the Counseling Center, director of student engagement and success, and Campus Accessibility Services have continued to work together to provide students the resources and help that they need. Career Counseling, Advancement, and Alumni Relations have been working on an alumni mentoring project. Residential Life, Registrar's Office, and Academic Affairs have been working on improving first-year and upper-class residential experiences starting in fall 2018.

Academic Affairs has been promoting Cluster Connect, both internally and externally, to increase opportunities for Cluster project connections. Faculty across campus have been revising their curriculum to take advantage of high-impact learning practices, working with staff and other partners on open labs and other Cluster projects. Financial Aid has been consulting for the Curriculum Committee. Financial Aid, Finance, and Human Resources are working on increasing opportunities for student workers (hourly and work study).

The new Student Services Center is shaping into a very useful one-stop-shop for students. Career Services, Internships, and Athletics created and ran career workshops for athletes during Winterim. Admissions and Enrollment Management, the success coaches, the new student programming coordinator, Career Services, and Academic Affairs are working on efforts to help students assess their interests and plan their path through the University accordingly. Financial Aid, Admissions and Enrollment Management, and Student Account Services developed and implemented a program to provide additional financial resources for students and are now focused on procedures for the Granite Guarantee.

Sustainability/Thriving financially, academically, and reputationally

In Development and Planned Giving, Susan Kline '74 committed to a \$1,000,000 bequest intention for unrestricted scholarships in the Plymouth Opportunity Scholarship. The estate of Mark Evans '83 is contributing \$100,000 for an unrestricted purpose. Glenn A. Smith committed to a \$25,000 bequest intention for an endowed scholarship for a music major, as well as a gift of a Yamaha 3C Grand Piano. Meghan C. Lang '17 has committed \$15,000 for the MAPS Leadership Scholarship that will award annually to the leaders of MAPS, Compass, and Statement student organizations. Plymouth General Dentistry has committed \$5,000 toward the arts and scholarship support. Panther Pride callers raised a total of \$414,998.44 for FY18, an increase of \$66,973.44 from FY17.

In Alumni Relations, we continue to bring alumni and students together at Alumni Chapter and on-campus events. If you or your Cluster or academic discipline is interested in hosting alumni on campus as guests in classrooms or for special events, please contact Brian Gagnon '05, '09G, assistant director for alumni and volunteer engagement, at alumni@plymouth.edu. [View our current list of events](#) and know that faculty and staff are always welcome.

Equipping our students to lead and thrive in the twenty-first century global economy

The First-Year Residential Experience (FYRE) at PSU aligns a revitalized housing and residential life operation, based on current best practices, with the tools of Integrated Clusters. The program embeds the General Education Habits of Mind: *Purposeful Communication; Problem Solving; Integrative Perspective; Self-Regulated Learning* in an accessible way for students to apply to their life outside of the classroom. Fostering non-cognitive skill development and social skill development that

is supportive of students who are transitioning to the University community, FYRE builds the foundation for our newest Panthers and allows them exposure and the ability to build pathways to all seven Clusters.

Through housing first-year students together in traditional-style residence halls with their First-Year Seminar cohort, we will more effectively meet their needs with specially-trained staff and intentional student programming focused on first-year student development. Further, FYRE creates a safe, resource-rich atmosphere for first-year students to go through the transition to college life together.

FYRE promotes student success by helping to create connections for students to peers, faculty/staff, support services, and ultimately the whole University. The entire program is structured to stimulate intellectual curiosity to help students more easily find their niche, feel part of the PSU community, and be engaged in our Cluster-based learning model.

The PASS Office held TRIO Spring Connection Days from January 25–27. TRIO scholars and their mentors returned to PSU early for academic counseling, financial aid and literacy review, and educational and social activities. This past week, I joined leaders of other institutions in signing a letter written by the [Council for Opportunity in Education](#) President Maureen Hoyler and sent to the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Education and the Workforce Chair Virginia Foxx and Ranking Member Bobby Scott, sharing concerns about certain provisions within the House's "Promoting Real Opportunity, Success, and Prosperity through Education Reform" (PROSPER) Act. If enacted, these proposals would diminish funding and the ability of institutions to provide services provided by TRIO.

Career Development, in close collaboration with First-Year Seminar Fellows (Stephanie Halter, John Krueckeberg, Rachelle Lyons, and Tinglan Yang), Alumni Relations, and the Center for Student Success, is piloting a first-year mentoring model with a dozen alumni volunteers. The result of this pilot will inform the development of a larger scale-mentoring model. [View our list of current Career Development programs](#) and please help spread the word to your students.

Some great ideas are coming out of the URI process and I am particularly excited about some of the approaches that will broaden and strengthen our graduate programs as well as our undergraduate endeavors through the addition of 4+1 and 3+2 opportunities. Our graduate programs are a key element in our move to Clusters and I look forward to the growth of these endeavors.

Finally, the work we have been doing in transforming PSU is highlighted today in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*. ([Click here](#); if you have difficulties accessing the article online please contact MCCS for assistance.) There has been considerable faculty and staff input so it reflects many of your/our feelings and thoughts. I will be giving an invited talk to the American Physical Society this month as well and have just done a podcast (a link to it will be provided to you in the near future). Also, Plymouth State has been in the international news because of our Olympic athlete Freydis Einarsdotter. Our athletes are a key component of our student body and great representatives of the

University as a whole. Recruited from all over the country and the world, they bring diversity to our residential experience.

Lastly and very importantly, we are working on a salary increase we plan for May. It won't be a lot but hopefully it will hold everyone over until we are in a better situation financially.

Thank you all for the work you have been doing to create a sustainable, vibrant, and integrated education for all our students. I know many of you are on overload these days, but I assure you we will get through this and we will be the better for it, and so will our students.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Don Birx', written in a cursive style.

Don Birx
President