5-1-2018

President's Monthly Report to Campus May 2018

Don Birx
*Plymouth State University*

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May 2018

Dear Colleagues,

It is hard to believe that this is my last report for the school year and, as I am writing this, it is finally sunny and 70° outside. I know by the time you get this it may be snowing again, but today is beautiful and the students are everywhere enjoying the day!

Coming up, the next Town Hall meeting will be on May 7, and we will be detailing accomplishments and goals for the coming year in our five focal areas and in the University Reinvention Initiative (URI), so I hope you will be able to attend or watch the video recording. The focus during the next few months will be to work through the URI process and the other actions we have initiated this year, with the goal of getting everything set up so our new provost, Dr. Robin Dorff, can quickly get up to speed when he comes in late June. He will begin working with the new organization structure of the Provost Council (with his first meeting this week); as of July 1, we will no longer have colleges and the deans will be moving to other responsibilities and aiding in the transition to the new Cluster structure. That said, I’m not going to introduce any new ideas in this report, as we have plenty to work on and much we need to better organize and implement.

You may have heard about the USNH board meeting, which was more intense than usual. The main topic was: enhancing the future financial viability of the University System and the component universities given the projected demographic decline, the limited financial resources available, the increased competition, and the financial challenges families are facing. USNH is seeking ideas on consolidation and collaboration to cut costs across the system. That said, the Board continues to fully support our plan and seems to be happy with our progress and innovations. So although these times are challenging, there are currently no plans for large-scale RIFs. When skills and abilities are a fit for newly shaped roles, we do seek to fill those positions internally. As our transformation continues, to the extent possible, we will communicate strategy in advance of major changes to services areas so that faculty and staff are well informed in order to best serve students.

I applaud the recent recognition of faculty and programs across the University; below are just a few highlights:

- **Next Steps New Hampshire: College, Career, and Life Readiness** received an Exemplary Program Award from the American Council for Rural Special Education at its 37th annual national conference in Salt Lake City this March. The program is funded by a federal grant and has involved a six-year collaboration between PSU, Keene State College, regional partners, high schools, and the NH Department of Education (NHDOE). Dr. Ann Berry from PSU, joined by colleagues from Keene State, accepted the award on behalf of Next Steps NH.

- **The Marketing Association of Plymouth State (MAPS)** placed eighth at the American Marketing Association (AMA) National Collegiate Conference last week! The team competed against 405 other AMA collegiate chapters.
- Plymouth State’s Enactus team won at the Chicago Regional Competition, securing its place in the Enactus U.S. National Exposition! The team will travel to Kansas City in May to compete against other regional finalists.
- PSU’s Ed.D. program is one of only a handful of institutions chosen to become part of the Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate consortium.
- On the accreditation front, two of our stellar education programs, music education and art education, have met and exceeded NHDOE accreditation standards.
- Finally, PSU Professors Roxanna Wright and Chen Wu are continuing to see state and regional recognition for their recent report on New Hampshire Direct Foreign Investment, which details the breadth and depth of foreign investment in New Hampshire. Their report has been covered by numerous state and regional media outlets since it was unveiled in March.

Now for some specific details in each of our focal areas.

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

**URI Implementation**
The beginning of April was spent reviewing and categorizing the large volume of excellent ideas. Eight codes were used to categorize them, including 1) needs rework/rejected; 2) approved to move forward following existing procedures; 3) share with Cluster for consultation/commitment; 4) further discussion and evaluation is needed before actionable; 5) propose as Cluster project or (Student) Research Advisory ((S)RAC) grant; 6) under discussion with dean or deans; 7) decision to be made in collaboration with units outside of Academic Affairs; and 8) follow established procedures for faculty position requests. Further explanation of the process can be found in this month’s deans’ report.

**Provost’s Council**
The academic deans have organized the first two meetings of the Provost’s Council for May 4 and May 11. We look forward to this collaborative opportunity to plan for the future of the Integrated Clusters collectively. Our new provost, Dr. Robin Dorff, will be in our area house-hunting during the first week of May and we are pleased that he will be leading the first meeting of the council.

**Recruitment and Enrollment**
In Undergraduate Recruitment, the past month has been focused on yield for the fall 2018 class and launching recruitment for the fall 2019 class. For fall 2019, strategic inquiry generation efforts have been running for months now and recruitment travel has continued through the New England and mid-Atlantic states. For a second year, Admissions traveled to Colorado and northern California. Admissions and Academic Affairs also hosted a delegation from Xinyang Normal University, which was a connection made during travels last spring and fall to the Henan province of China. Efforts to recruit in newly identified domestic and international regions stems from our desire to further globalize PSU and respond to the current demographic challenges that have unfolded and will continue to grow more challenging throughout New England.
At the end of April, deposits for fall were lagging behind the fall 2017 class, however, the lag was attributed to a later start to the Accepted Students Day events when compared to prior years due to the Good Friday/Easter Weekend occurring on the first weekend in April. As for the Accepted Students Day events, each brought a wonderful turnout of admitted students and family members, and the assistance from all on campus was greatly appreciated! Also, Admissions saw an unexpected uptick in application volume between mid-March to mid-April (+172 more applications YTD), which has led to later cycle admission offers being made. When looking at historical recruitment data, Admissions will have projections for the fall 2018 class closer to May 15-20 dates.

The next few months will see Admissions collaborating with Student Engagement and Student Success to successfully transition recruited students to becoming newly enrolled students by the end of August. Admissions collaborated with Alumni Affairs to begin summer melt reduction efforts, through which interested alumni mentors made visits to high schools to congratulate and welcome deposited students in an effort to establish a connection. Also, the Summer Bridge Planning Group is teamed up with the faculty taskforce working on the Intro to Cluster Experience (ICE), a credit-based experience for this year’s Summer Bridge program. The ICE course will be rooted in the General Education Habits of Mind, which will be underscored for students in their First-Year Residential Experience as well.

Enrollment Management, along with interested faculty, staff, and alumni, has taken the lead to host an informational “meet and greet” to engage our current veterans and family members of veterans. This meeting will highlight current support services that PSU offers and to hear from participants about ways that the University can improve to better serve the needs of our veteran community, as well as others who may be using GI Bill benefits. This session will also serve as a platform for participants to build connections. The session will take place on May 10 from 4:30-6:30 p.m. in the HUB Hage Room.

In Graduate Recruitment - Going into the end of April and comparing spring semester to last year’s spring semester, applications for spring were 160 compared to 107, applications for summer were 389 compared to 263, and applications for fall were running flat. In registrations and enrollments, spring registrations were 1811 compared to 1298, summer registrations were 498 compared to 295, and fall registrations were 253 compared to 108. Both Admissions and MCCS attended the April Grad Council meeting to share graduate marketing research and collect challenges and concerns from Graduate Program coordinators. A summer working group is being formed that will join Admissions, MCCS, and representatives from Grad Council in addressing the challenges and concerns shared. Also, Admissions at the Grad Council meeting announced that an application deadline has to be established for reasons linked to – (the institution consistently performing and maintaining ethical student record data entry/management and consistently adhering to the timeline of performing federal financial aid disbursement to students who applying for funds to assist in paying for that semester.) To begin moving in an appropriate direction, the application deadline will be the last day of add/drop of the last part-of-term.

In Financial Aid, after 18 years of service to Plymouth State, Director of Financial Aid Crystal Gaff has decided to resign to pursue new endeavors. Crystal has taken on a position at Granite State College to assist with technological upgrades that are unfolding. She will be greatly missed and thanks to her hard work and dedication to both the field of financial aid and the institution, numerous PSU graduates, current students, and future students found the financial means to make a Plymouth State University education possible.
Crystal will remain in her position until the end of May and in the interim, a temporary financial aid consultant will be on campus to oversee federal compliance management while efforts unfold to merge the Financial Aid and Student Account Service teams to represent a one-stop shop.

In Student Success Coach advising, the coaches reported the preregistration advising period running smoothly. It was observed that students appeared to be better prepared for preregistration appointments. Coaches performed phone, e-mail, and text outreach while hosting scheduled appointments, open drop-in appointments, and group advising sessions.

Retention and Persistence

Many individuals have asked, “What can I do to help with retention and persistence?” Here is a suggestion that was published last month by Inside Higher Ed: The Persistence Project.

In 2015, Oakton Community College instituted a simple and very effective retention and persistence tool that the Resistance and Persistence Working Group suggests we emulate. Oakton asked faculty members to reach out to one student at least five times a semester with the purpose of asking open-ended questions and listening to answers; some faculty chose to hold meetings with more students. While the article focuses on faculty connections, the same is true for staff efforts. Face-to-face connections are tremendously important.

The initial Gallup-Purdue Index Report (2014) of more than 30,000 college graduates notes that “if an employed graduate had a professor who cared about them as a person” they were much more likely to be engaged in their workplace (p. 7 and 10) and experience greater feelings of well-being. (Note, too, the report’s finding that deep and experiential learning allows graduates to feel that the university prepared them for life after college.) Over the summer and at retreats, please consider how the Persistence Project may fit into the work of your Cluster, discipline, and/or syllabi.

Sustainability/Thriving financially, academically, and reputationally

In Development, a non-alumni donor couple just pledged $750,000 for scholarships for students from the North Country. John J. Marrapese ’90 generously pledged a new gift to the Pamela and John F. Marrapese “Keep NH Lakes Clear” Endowed Scholarship Fund. Annual Giving just sent the spring appeal letter to all of those who have generously supported Plymouth State over the past five years but have yet to share their support for PSU Students this fiscal year. The letter features Kayleigh Bennett ’18 and Elijah Johnson ’18. As of April 1, led by our Panther Pride ambassadors, the Annual Giving Program has secured $470,456.

The focus in April for Marketing Communications and Creative Services (MCCS) was marketing and messaging to accepted students and families that encouraged them to attend an Accepted Students Day and make their deposit. MCCS has also continued to market the Granite Guarantee program and made a direct marketing appeal to transfer students through targeted and geo-fenced digital and social media advertising. MCCS hosted several Facebook Live events with a focus on financial aid, student services, residential life, and student activities for both prospective students and their parents. Spring brings a new focus on marketing for our graduate programs, including underwriting on public radio and local and regional print advertising in May.
On April 23, the RFP for an integrated marketing agency closed and on-campus presentations will occur in early May, with an agency to be chosen by May 15. This agency will begin work with the University on July 1.

MCCS will increasingly be focusing time and resources to update the plymouth.edu website, working closely with Information Technology Services to bring the new internal-facing campus site to full functionality to meet the needs of all key internal and external audiences.

MCCS is pleased to announce that Corey Hoyt joined the team as the new assistant director on April 30. His previous experience working in communications for Academic Affairs will allow Corey to continue the important work of assisting the Clusters leadership in marketing their programs at the graduate and undergraduate levels.

In the April report, Alumni Relations shared early feedback from the first-year mentoring pilot, which has led to planning a multi-track volunteer program, and further details on those tracks were shared in the recent New Student Success Initiatives message. While the spring pilot continues, the First-Year Mentoring Program is now focusing with Admissions on areas in MA and NH that have historically had the highest rate of “melt.” This revised program will introduce new students and their families to alumni mentors, who will remain connected throughout the summer in support of our campus efforts to welcome our newest class into the Plymouth State family. The Greater Manchester and Panther Business Club alumni chapters are taking leadership roles in recruiting volunteers to serve in this strategic initiative.

Career Development, through class visits, one-on-one appointments, events, programs, and opportunity fairs, had 1,035 unique student engagements (1,255 total engagements) this year as of April 11. With more programs on the horizon this spring and into summer, the posting of the director of career development position, and building out a career lab in Holmes Alumni House, Career Development is working toward its multi-year goal of being able to support all of our students.

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

Chris Lee, Domenica Medaglia-Brown, and Patti May attended the New England Education Opportunity Association (NEOA) Conference, April 3-6, in Stowe, VT. The mission of NEOA is to advocate for access to and success in postsecondary education for low income, first generation college students, and students with disabilities. On April 2 and 3, Kyle Somma and Angie Ricciardi met with students from UNH’s Educational Talent Search (ETS), a TRIO program that assists middle-school-aged students from disadvantaged backgrounds and encourages them to graduate from high school and complete their postsecondary education. May and Lee have also met with several federal staffers, helping them to understand the impact and importance of TRIO funding to individual students and to the larger society.

A new Career Development and Internship Strategy is being developed to aid students in preparing for the challenges of the twenty-first century by helping them learn to think critically so they can prepare to work in jobs that don’t yet exist. We intend to capitalize on all of our PSU resources to help students build an extensive network of mentors and supporters who can guide and encourage them. In turn, alumni and community members deepen their engagement and philanthropic support of the University.
Our goals are to increase student participation in career development programming; improve event branding and PSU reputation with corporate, nonprofit, and governmental/civic partners; and create and enhance cultures of student engagement and philanthropy to help our students prepare for lives as professionals and citizens. An initial team is forming to further detail and implement the integrated approach. Membership will be comprised of Residential Life, Student Affairs, Alumni Relations, Career Development, Events and Conference Planning, Athletics, Marketing, faculty representatives, and student organizations.

Salary increases are planned for this spring and will represent a 1.5% increase to base effective May 1, and a 1% one-time bonus with a $500 minimum adjusted for satisfactory or above performance. This effectively gives all the projected margin generated by PSU (and a little more) to employees at PSU. An equivalent will be set aside for the AAUP union members when the contract is ratified. For the next two years, the plan is to try to provide cost of living increases of approximately 1.5% (this is the average increase per year over the last 5 years) and one-time bonuses that match half the margin percentage (i.e. a 1% margin = 0.5% salary bonus; 4% = 2% salary bonus). As PSU prospers we will make adjustments accordingly. (Note: this has not been approved by the trustees yet.) Please note that margin strictly relates to operations—how well we are doing each year. Capital investments (in buildings and renovations) is excluded from the calculation and only shows up in borrowing (which we are not doing for anything but construction of new buildings—none planned) and deferred maintenance costs.

Linda and I enjoyed seeing many of our students in a very creative Plymouth State Dance and Choir Collaboration: The Diary of Anne Frank last Friday evening. It was great! This week, PSU will be hosting the softball tournament, and women’s lacrosse tournament beginning Thursday.

Reminder, please join me on Monday, May 7, from 3:30-5 p.m., for the next Town Hall meeting in Merrill Place: Looking to the Future and Celebrating our Successes.

Thanks to all of you that have been working towards, and will be attending, graduation. I am hopeful that with the plans we have put in place, graduation will be an even better experience for the graduates and undergraduates.

Finally, I wish you all a fantastic summer and I hope that everyone will get a chance to get away with family and friends. With all that we are doing it is easy to get burnt out and while we have much more to do and another challenging year ahead, it will be getting easier on all of us after the coming academic year.

Sincerely,

Don Birx
President