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President's Monthly Report to Campus October 2018

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October 2018

Dear Colleagues,

We had a very successful homecoming with around 5,000 participating over the weekend and beautiful weather sandwiched between rainy weekdays. Saturday’s games had great attendance with Panthers’ wins in tennis and football drawing over 160 cars for tailgating. As our campus starts to look and feel like fall, we continue to grow as a University. Both undergraduate and graduate enrollment increased again this year. In fact, since 2014 undergraduate enrollment has increased by 400 students. That is remarkable by any standard. In addition, this year’s retention increased between one and two percent. For those of you who attended the EAB session at University Days, you may remember that two percent was the maximum one could expect retention to grow in a year. If we can increase the pace that will mean in five years we can attain our goal of 80% retention. There has been much happening both on and off campus:

- We will be closing again during the week of winter break to conserve resources as well as to give everyone time with their family. We appreciate the dedication and commitment all of you have shown over the last three years of tremendous change and long hours as we endeavor to move ahead of the upheaval occurring across the Nation, and most dramatically in New England, in higher education.

- We continue to move ahead with our proposal to the state for an additional $3-9 million over the next two years. So far there has been an openness to seriously discuss the proposal.

- Summit Day was a success with participation from faculty, staff, and students. In fact, students participated in guided hikes exploring one of seven mountains from beginner to advanced levels of difficulty plus self-guided hikes exploring one of 14 mountains of varying difficulty. Next year, we are considering moving it to the weekend so more can participate.

- In mid-September, the Board of Trustees held a retreat that focused on collaboration among the campuses to improve sustainability and awareness. This will lead to some discussions, starting with IT, about ways to collaborate across the system. Since our IT group is among, if not the most efficient, it gives us an opportunity to offer insights and recommendations.
• A week later, we met with presidents from the community colleges and their chancellor to improve pathways from community colleges to PSU and to link their seven focal areas to Plymouth State’s seven clusters.

• Last month, we discussed the CAEP accreditation for educator preparation and on September 17 we visited with CAEP in Washington, D.C. As a result of our appeal, CAEP’s prior decision to revoke accreditation of PSU, the initial-licensure level, was amended to Probationary Accreditation. Moreover, as we address areas for improvement, only targeted reporting and review are required, so hopefully we can move forward quickly. During this entire time, we were accredited with both CAEP and the State of NH Department of Education. Many thanks to Dr. Mary Earick for her hard work in achieving this result.

• Many students continue to enter PSU with high levels of anxiety, as well as experiencing loneliness in the first few weeks. Thanks to all of you who have been sending in C.A.R.E. forms and encouraging students through this transition to university life and as we continue to expand programs to address these needs.

• For those of you who didn’t make it to the Human Trafficking: Research and Prevention conference on September 8, attendees filled Merrill Place. I found the last presenter who told her ‘story’ and detailed her road to recovery incredibly compelling. Many thanks to those in Counselor Education and School Psychology, and the NH Human Trafficking Collaborative Task Force who hosted this endeavor.

• At the last faculty meeting there were questions about locked doors and research center support. After looking into the doors (which have been locked for safety reasons), everyone has access using their PSU identification card to the doors and additional cardholders are being provided. Also, for special events, etc., you will need to request that the doors be opened. I know there are some additional safety concerns across campus which we continue to address. If there are still concerns, we would be glad to have further discussions on how we might enhance safety but remain as open a campus as possible. As for the research center, the goal really is to broaden the service that was provided in the Environmental Center to all of campus and expand our research footprint—especially as we integrate project-based experiences into more of our Clusters and increase our engagement with students. The provost is working on developing the support resources required and is in consultation with faculty doing research.

• Forums occurred last week as initiated by the faculty, OS, PAT, and Student Speakers. Although attendance was not as large as expected, the preliminary feedback suggests pathways forward as we integrate the changes over the last three years and stabilize into our cluster-based organization. More to come on this.
• As discussed in last month’s faculty meeting, we are conferring with students on whether to move undergraduate graduation back to Saturday in 2020 as the changes we put in place last May resulted in a successful celebration. If anyone has any thoughts why we shouldn’t move the date back, just email me.

• The provost is rethinking global programs to address expected growth in incoming international as well as study-abroad programs.

The following updates align with our focal areas, each of which relate to equipping our students to lead and thrive in the twenty-first century global economy.

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

In order to promote a cohesive focus on student's PSU experience, key areas of Student Affairs that link with Academic Affairs will now report to the Provost. Student Affairs is comprised of Student Climate and Student Life. Student Climate includes the Counseling Center; Student Conduct; Campus Accessibility Services; Campus Ministry; Concerns, Awareness, Referral, Engagement (CARE); and Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. Student Life includes student events, student activities (recreational programs and intramural sports), and student organizations (Student Government, Clubs, and Greek Life). One goal is to ensure an intentional, collaborative student experience that includes our core academic mission and is linked to comprehensive student success.

Phase 2 of the First Year Seminar (FYS) was launched this year and includes a focus on project-based learning that touches the outside world. The Integrated Capstone (INCO) Fellows are preparing to launch a pilot of the revised INCO this spring. Cathie LeBlanc submitted a $300,000 proposal to the Davis Foundation to support faculty development in pedagogy central to the cluster learning. We anticipate an answer within the next few months.

URI proposal letters went out in September to faculty for those proposals that are either ready to go or require more collaboration with Enrollment Management, Holmes Center, other programs/clusters or other PSU units. These proposals included 3+2 and 4+1 programs, cluster curriculum, and curriculum efficiencies.

**Recruitment and Enrollment**

With the new admissions cycle underway in undergraduate recruitment, the team is engaged in recruitment travel and applications are coming in for both Spring 2019 and Fall 2019. Prior year visits to the Henan Province of China, which led to PSU hosting a delegation from Xinyang Normal University back in May, had led to a delegation from Henan Normal University expressing interest in visiting campus and are tentatively scheduled to arrive in November. Next semester, the folk music orchestra from Zhengzhou University is looking to come to campus for a
visit. Upcoming recruitment events include Admissions hosting a New Hampshire School Counselor event on October 5; a New Hampshire Fly-in Program for International High School College Guidance Counselors on October 7-8; a national school counselor tour group on October 15; and 1,000 eighth and ninth grade students on November 2 sponsored by Gear Up New Hampshire. USNH Board of Trustee Bob Baines, has set up high schools in the Manchester and White Mountains areas through STEAMHEAD NH to visit on October 11-12. Participating students will be engaged in a campus visit experience that will mirror the spirit of PSU’s First Year Seminar where prospective students will be working in collaborative teams to utilize campus resources that will help them solve their unique wicked problem.

**Open House events** will take place on Monday, October 8; Friday, October 27; Monday, November 12; and an Athletics Open House is scheduled for Saturday, December 8. In Transfer Student Recruitment, conversations have continued to explore a block transfer initiative with the Community College System of New Hampshire (CCSNH) institutions. Conversations between CCSNH and PSU have focused on transfer students who are awarded an Associate’s Degree in Liberal Arts (awarded at all CCSNH schools) transferring in their completed course work as a block (to come in as our Gen Ed). Admissions discussed this idea with both the Gen Ed coordinator and the Gen Ed Committee who gave a general (but enthusiastic) endorsement to engage in presenting the idea to each CCSNH institution. This month the transfer recruitment team launched a new initiative for first-year applicants who were denied admission in an effort to provide a direct pathway back to PSU after completing recommended coursework at another institution while meeting PSU’s admission criteria. Additionally, the transfer recruitment team is examining new visit types starting with a pilot of a Transfer Student Outdoor Visit and Onsite Decision Day, which will bring prospective transfer students to campus for an information session and tour. They will also go on a hike or kayak with CALE student leaders and upon return to campus, the transfer team will have an admission decision waiting for them.

Undergraduate enrollment was actualized at 4,176 compared to 4,132 last year and 4,098 in 2016. At R+30, the fall 2018 incoming class came in at 1,327 (which include new first-year, transfer, and re-admission students) compared to 1,343 last year. Three notable factors that attributed to trailing (-16) behind last year were 1) a decrease in the number of transfer students from 4-year institutions likely due to 4-year institutions dedicating efforts to increase retention. 2) While Admissions saw year-over-year gains in the number of admitted and deposited new first-year students demonstrating a high school GPA of 3.25–4.0, Admissions also observed a drop in the number of students demonstrating a high school GPA below 2.74 and the drop exceed the higher GPA gain. 3) Anecdotaly, an increased number of students are enrolling but are then leaving in the first four weeks stating reasons linked to mental health/anxiety has been an observation reported and this observation needs to be further explored and discussed. On a positive note, academic quality appears to be stronger and the R+30 data indicates a one-point gain in retention when compared to last year. Summer efforts did prevent the upward trend in summer melt which fell by a percentage point.
In **graduate recruitment**, Admissions is engaged in a final multi-channel outreach push to gain additional fall registrations. Recruitment travel is underway, and Admissions will be launching a search for an Admissions Recruiter focused exclusively on graduate recruitment. Graduate Student Recruitment Information Sessions have been set up and running over a 6-week period: PSU juniors and seniors on September 26; counseling programs on October 10; business programs on October 11; ELLC programs on October 16; all GR programs on October 23; and Ed.D. on November 6. Admissions recently purchased leads for business, physical therapy, athletic training, and biology, and a multi-channel outreach plan is being executed with the USNH online call center. Communicated to the Grad Council, Admissions had to put into effect application deadlines where future applicants must apply for admission **prior to the start of a term** and enroll **prior to the start of a term** versus applying for admission after a term has already started. This decision was driven by matters linked to student record management and a recently identified Financial Aid compliance issue creating an overarching threat to Plymouth State that could impact the entire institution’s eligibility for Title IV funds.

Current registrations and enrollments stand at 1,539 compared to 1,354 last year and 1,204 in 2016 (as of September 21). Total FY registrations and enrollments are 2,741 compared to 2,671 last year and 2,528 in 2016. The R+30 matriculated enrollment count is 837 compared to 817.

In **Student Success**, the advising team in the Center for Student Success has been quite busy since the semester started. Many first-year students took advantage of Student Success Coach walk-in hours during Panther Days and the Add/Drop week. Since then, Student Success Coaches have been meeting individually with their advisees to help them acclimate to campus life, finalize their semester schedules, and follow up on concerns raised by course instructors. Progress Reports submitted by First-Year Seminar instructors at the end of Week 3 through the Student Success Collaborative system provided great insight into students who may need additional support. Out of 634 reports that were submitted, 60 first-year students were marked as "at-risk" for failing the course that triggered follow up advising meetings from the Success Coaches. The Success Coaches have also been working collaboratively with CARE, Residential Life, Athletics, and the Coordinator of New Student Programming to capture and respond to new students facing barriers that could threaten persistence. The Degree Completion Advisors have begun working on degree audits for current juniors along with offering Academic Support Recovery Sessions (a new initiative for this academic year) for those on Academic Probation. Session offerings have included: **PASS & CAS, Stress Management & Test Anxiety, Study Strategies, Writing Center & Math Activities Center, Counseling Center & Student Support Foundation, Student Account Services/Financial Aid, Student Engagement and David Zehr (Student Advocate)**.

In **Veteran Services**, PSU graduate student, Jane Manning, has been engaged in a fall practicum that will focus on Veterans Support Services. While working with new incoming and current students, she will be analyzing the current state of support services to help inform a future state. As part of her practicum, a Veteran Services space has been secured **(Speare 113)** and she is receiving support from Professor Nancy Puglisi and Enrollment Management along with other student service functions to perform her work. Over the past few weeks, Jane reports researching activity on campus in support of student veterans. The Events office is sponsoring the Veterans
Day Celebration on November 9 from 11:45 a.m. -12:30 p.m. and Athletics is sponsoring the Salute to the Troops Weekend, November 9-10. Furthermore, Athletics would like to have a color guard at the November 10 Football Game and Jane will be working to identify students on campus who would like to participate. Jane will also be working with the local Army National Guard Unit to support this event. Alumni Relations and the Registrar’s Office is working to identify current students on campus who would be interested in participating in a PSU Veterans group to connect student veterans with alumni veterans. This information will also serve as a tool to communicate with student veterans on campus and provide information on future events and opportunities on campus. Jane has also been exploring VA Work Study which may provide opportunities for student veterans on campus and has been invited to a veterans services brainstorming meeting on November 2 hosted by University Advancement along with attending two events off-campus with Admissions.

Retention and Persistence

The Student Success Coaches report that the first-year students are off to a good start. The new cohorted housing arrangement is helping to create a feeling of belonging at the start of the academic career. Please remember to reach out to any student that you feel is unengaged and listen to that student.

The Retention-Persistence Working Group met on September 24 and came up with recommendations in six areas. Also, in recent discussion with Marcia Schmidt Blaine, they are going to be developing two focal areas, one involving short-term, more immediate tasks and another focal group on longer term more strategic tasks. This way we can address in parallel, more immediate issues as well as long-term strategic goals while at the same time prioritizing tasks in two areas based on available resources.

Dr. Sonja Ardoin will speak on Thursday, November 1 from 1:30-3:30 p.m. in the Welcome Center. Sponsored by USNH, CCSNH, and the NH Humanities Collaborative and hosted by PSU, Dr. Ardoin will explore how a working-class, rural environment influences opportunities to pursue higher education and engage in the college choice process for rural, first-generation college students. Her presentation will be followed by a panel on “What can I become?: Higher Education Expectations, Aspirations, and Pathways for Rural and First-Generation Students in Northern New England.”

Sustainability/Thriving financially, academically, and reputationally

Financial Highlight: Based on R+30 data, undergraduate FFTEs (financial full-time equivalent) are projected to be 12 short of our stretch goal used in our budget (3,910 vs 3,922 respectively). This is primarily due to the projected lower counts in the first three classes (-22, -29, and -36), which is largely offset in FY19. This is because we have higher than planned Senior and Senior+ counts (+75). Additional financial updates will be provided in future reports. So far, we are on plan financially.
Financial Operations is working with USNH Procurement on the upcoming January launch of Jaegger, the new System-wide e-procurement and contracts management tool. This tool will dramatically change how we buy goods and services utilizing mainstream online shopping cart functionality. In conjunction with the production of online standard contracts, the contract process will become more efficient. There will be greater visibility into the contract flow as it captures electronic approvals and signatures along the way. Please stay tuned as more information will follow in the coming months.

In Development, former adjunct faculty member Richard Gerken has committed a blended gift of $170,000 to the Stadium and Turf Field Project. His blended gift consists of a cash, pledge, and a bequest intention. Richard has grown fond of the student-athletes and coaches at his wife’s (Carol Flate Gerken ’67) alma mater. To date, we have secured gifts totaling $1,622,871 for the Stadium and Turf Field. The amount left to raise is $377,129. Paul Berton ’76 has committed $10,000 for three scholarships for Plymouth State students who are graduates of Newfound Regional High School, in good academic standing, and have demonstrated financial need. The Annual Giving team has two primary goals: increase alumni engagement and improve the culture of philanthropy on campus. This year, they have raised nearly $20,000 more than last year at this time toward their $1 million goal. The Panther Pride Student Ambassadors have begun outreach to alumni.

Plymouth State's Day of Giving will be held on Tuesday, November 27, in tandem with #GivingTuesday, a global day of philanthropy. This year, we plan to involve the entire campus by engaging with affinity groups such as clubs and athletics teams. Many student clubs and organizations struggle to organize their fundraising in the fall and often are left scrambling in the Spring semester. For many alumni, their closest affinities are with the clubs, athletic teams, theatre, and other groups they were involved in as students.

Alumni Relations executed Homecoming & Family Celebration and Reunion Weekend on September 28-30, and many student clubs, athletics teams, Greeks, alumni, and faculty/staff planned a full schedule of great events.

The Panther Gridiron Club Alumni Chapter stepped up this fall, hosting a golf tournament to support fundraising efforts and leading the charge at home games with tailgating. They will also support the spring Football Networking night, helping connect players with alumni for career development support and mentoring. The Panther Business Club Alumni Chapter hosted an event at the QuickBase headquarters in Cambridge, MA on The Future of Software. A contingent of students from Enactus joined the group for the presentation and networking. This chapter has set ambitious goals to raise more money for student scholarships.

A fledgling Alumni Chapter is gaining momentum in Colorado, with four events planned for this year, including a gathering at the Boston Bruins versus the Colorado Avalanche hockey game. Our New Hampshire-based chapters have a number of events in the works for this year, learn more at plymouth.edu/alumni.
Marketing Communications and Creative Services (MCCS) continues to work closely with many University offices to provide updated materials, graphic standards, and messaging as needed. An extensive integrated media campaign is underway to reach our recruitment audiences including undergraduate, transfer, and graduate students.

MCCS and Events & Conference Planning are taking the lead on hosting the first-ever Governor’s Cup Robotics Competition to be held at ALLWell North on Saturday, October 13. Working closely with FIRST New Hampshire and Governor’s Office, this event will bring nearly 30 NH high school robotics teams to Plymouth State and will be hosted by President Birx, Governor Sununu, and Dean Kamen, engineer and inventor of the Segway and iBot Wheelchair. Volunteer opportunities for faculty, staff, and students will be shared soon.

Sponsored by the New Hampshire College & University Council and WMUR, Plymouth State is participating in a state-wide media effort to increase awareness for the many educational and career pathways available in the state. The goal of this effort is to encourage young people to stay in New Hampshire, attend local colleges and universities, and help fill viable jobs in the state.

Career Development is excited to announce Leslie Blakney ’07 as the new Director of Career Development after a national search. Leslie, serving most recently at Dartmouth as the associate director for career development, joined PSU on September 27.

PSUnite, a new mentoring platform, embarks on beta testing in the coming weeks with plans for a soft launch with a number of students, faculty, and alumni in the spring. The goal is to match all incoming first-year students with alumni mentors in Fall 2019.

The Professional Dinner on September 13 at The Savage Welcome Center was a great success with 100 students, faculty/staff, and alumni table hosts for this fun and informative event on business dining and networking etiquette. You may learn more on the Career Development website.

Facilities Update: For those of you who have not made it over to Geneva Smith Hall yet, one major change to the building floorplan comes in the form of common areas in the core of each floor level, complete with a kitchenette, a large screen TV, and furniture for collaborative study. Another major change is reconfigured bathrooms on each level accommodating all genders.

In the PE Center, construction of the new classroom, laboratory, and office space for the Health and Human Enrichment cluster is slated for completion in late October. In the coming weeks, the permanent siding will be attached to the building and the plastic wrap will be coming down. Landscaping and site work will follow behind that. Inside the building, crews are working long hours to finish the rooms and corridors.

Campus landscaping around Lamson Library, Mary Lyon Hall, Prospect Dining Hall, Silver Center for the Arts, Eco House, Holmes House, and Russell House were improved by removing overgrown and decaying trees, removing invasive plant species, and replanting with new plants.
and shrubs. This fall, we will be evaluating landscaped areas across campus to set priorities for improvements in 2019.

In the Counseling Center, four additional offices were constructed within the existing facility. The added offices will allow counseling center staff to meet the growing demand for services.

The space in the Draper & Maynard (D&M) building, formerly housing the Karl Drerup Art Gallery is soon to be transformed to a fabrication laboratory. The design of the space is well underway and construction is expected to start early next year. The wood flooring and track lighting left behind in the space was recycled and reused on two other projects on the upper levels of the same building.

The Reflection Center (church building) ran into some challenges with guano in the attic. Since that is cleaned up, roofing will start in early October. Additionally, Hyde Hall is developing a flexible space for student collaboration, teaching, and cluster project work, and Mary Lyon Hall has a new classroom in the garden level.

I am looking forward to our first Town Hall meeting of the academic year on Monday, October 15, at 3:30 p.m. in Merrill Place. This Town Hall we will be trying something new based on discussions in the forums.

Sincerely,

Don Birx
President