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# President's Monthly Report to Campus December 2018

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# PRESIDENT'S MONTHLY REPORT TO CAMPUS

December 2018

Dear Colleagues,

Since this is the end of the year I thought I would deal directly with some the issues that we have faced this year and will face next year. I wanted to start with Student Housing as it has been a point of discussion recently and is linked to our vision for the future. Student housing has historically gone through a review each year to determine adjustment needed based on housing demand. In recent years, even though there has been an increase in off campus housing and plans to build more, we have held our policy at two years on campus residency. At the same time the town has been concerned about keeping student growth and activities on campus (and sending us the costs for off campus policing). We are up 400 students in four years so we are at a decision point.

There has also been very little investment in on campus housing for decades. Normally auxiliaries add to the bottom line, but that is really not the case at PSU given all the deferred maintenance that is needed. Over the past few years, we have sought to hold any yearly adjustments and start upgrading housing to make it a preferred choice. We have created Merrill Place and upgraded Smith Hall, but there is much left to do. We are at a juncture where we either tear down residence halls, as is planned at Keene, or upgrade them. The challenge with tearing residence halls down is our expectations for improvement in retention and graduation rates. We have made retention and graduation rates a key focus for our future, because we believe that at least 50 percent of our incoming students should graduate in four years and at least 65 percent over six years. These students are at 81 percent already in part by building a strong on campus community. If we accomplish this that will lead to the need for roughly 200-300 more on campus housing spaces needed and the residence halls will be essentially full (In fact we were at 97% occupancy at the start of this year). Concomitant with this is the view that we need to increase student involvement outside of the classroom in on campus activities and projects if we are to improve retention. So, in the new layout in Smith Hall, there are common spaces on each floor. This aligns with our Cluster vision to better involve students in scholastic activities outside of the classroom and create more study-friendly spaces.

We are working on plans to create differentiated housing structures, which we will start implementing next year. We choose this route, before deciding to tear down residence halls (which we would need to do to take the deferred maintenance off the books), in the fervent hope that we can indeed improve graduation rates and increase involvement in on campus learning and engagement activities, thereby strengthening our campus community and increasing retention. To do this we had to make a change in policy this year (during the usual review process) and we

got it out early because it was a significant change. (I was not aware of the policy recommendation prior to the last town hall meeting or it would have been brought up.)

Yes, it is a financial decision, but from the viewpoint of a larger vision with retention at the heart of it. This is a classic chicken and egg challenge; if one doesn't have the resources one can't upgrade the residence halls, implement the vision, or include residential life in increasing retention. In the end, if we are successful, everyone wins, especially our students. Looking at colleges and universities across the nation that have high on campus enrollments in residence halls and apartments, the graduation rates are often far higher than ours. There could be many contributing factors, but this is one approach worth trying.

There has been a lot of discussion about Cluster structure and the role of programs and departments. While the provost and I wrote a blog post, we decided not to send out anything until there could be a more thorough discussion (However, the provost has sent out some objectives to the Provost Council). Cluster faculty have made suggestions on structure that provide an opportunity to move beyond some of the structural concerns. That will be the focus of the Provost Council this week and perhaps in our faculty meeting. In discussions across campus, it has been clear that there is a need to coordinate curriculum both within and across Clusters and to have a Cluster team leader. Beyond that there is considerable flexibility on how teams are made up and can evolve. So hopefully with faculty and staff input, we can put a simple working structure in place as this all evolves and focus on our five goals and curricular development.

Whatever we do eventually with structure or curriculum, there are financial realities that we will need to face as we move forward. I have appended a chart from the last board meeting on the systemwide margin trend over the last five years. I have also included the chart on enrollment across the system. As strange as it might sound, because of the changes we have made (as difficult as they have been) we have been doing relatively well over the last three years, but "relatively" will not be good enough for the years ahead as can be seen. We as a system are facing some tough challenges ahead. This too suggests that we need to put aside these structural issues that are slowing our progress.

On the positive side, we had our preliminary budget hearing with the governor and key legislative and administrative units. Our budget request appears to be moving forward to the next stage. If passed it will make a substantial difference in the resources available over the next two years.

As requested we have sent out a blog post today detailing some of the benefits of Clusters. This list complements the contents of one of the first blogs and will hopefully expand as others provide input.

There has been much discussion about communications and we are winding up a communications audit. More details are included in the body of this report. We will start implementing the findings at the beginning of the year.

Morale is always huge challenge with such dramatic change and cost cutting. It has been exasperated by the lack of clarity on Cluster structure at the same time that the future of departments are in question. So for those that are struggling with structure, we are going to take a break and try to establish a structure(s) that allows us to move forward while we sort everything out. I don't have all the answers and neither does anyone else. We do know that we need to focus on curricular evolution, retention, and sustainability as the provost has noted earlier; those along with building community will be the areas of concentration as we return in January. This will give us an opportunity to let curricular evolution, retention, and sustainability lead structure.

Cathie LeBlanc is already making much progress in general education and from Cluster meetings I have attended, some great ideas are coming forward as they did in the URI process (many concepts of which are being investigated or implemented). The awarding of the Davis Grant noted below is a boon for all of us. Many thanks to Cathie and all those that contributed in writing the grant. Moreover, although we are being challenged internally on Cluster structure, outside of PSU the support from our communities (state, region, alumni, donors) has increased and internally, First-Year Seminar implementation has been successful (please take time to visit the presentations on Wednesday, December 5, at 5:30 pm in ALLWell North), applications are up over 20 percent, some really great projects are ongoing, and ideas are coming forward that will further change and yet build our community.

All that said, we wish everyone a restful and joyous break. I hope you had a chance to attend some of the superb performances in the last month. They have been great. Many thanks to all involved. We'll do our best to start next year with an approach of working together that builds our sense of community and shared governance (faculty and staff), for it will take all of us if we are going to create a sustainable and thriving university.

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

The Office of Academic Affairs is concentrating on several key priorities related to Clusters.

#### **Cluster Leadership**

We continue to work with Cluster leadership teams, the TLT, and the Provost's Council to discuss and assess Cluster-level organization and leadership. The goal is to evolve consistent leadership roles across Clusters. Recognizing that discipline-based programs need to communicate effectively internally and with Clusters, our leadership framework has to reflect issues from both programs and Clusters.

#### **Role of Teaching Lecturers in Integrated Cluster Model**

Based on discussions with TL leadership, both president and provost want to make sure we all understand that our TL faculty are integral to and full partners in our Cluster initiative. As we seek to evolve Cluster curriculum and Cluster pedagogy, all of our faculty should be fully

engaged in Cluster initiatives to include developing Cluster projects and collaborating with full-time faculty outside of programs.

### **National Recognition Continues**

The Cluster model continues to get attention outside the University. Just last week, PSU received \$214,632 from the Davis Educational Foundation to support faculty professional development as we engage more fully with the Integrated Cluster Initiative and Cluster Pedagogy. The funding will support the building of a community of teacher-scholars focused on developing learning opportunities with the following pedagogical elements:

- Interdisciplinarity and integration: Students are challenged to understand and use various disciplinary perspectives and to integrate those perspectives to create new and unique projects and/or solutions.
- Project-based work that extends beyond the walls of the classroom: Students work on projects that impact the world outside of the classroom in some way.
- Sharing with an external audience: Student work is shared with an audience external to the course.

Cathie LeBlanc, general education coordinator and author of the grant application, says, “An underlying idea of this framing of Cluster Pedagogy is that we are opening up the educational experience. We ask students to do at least some work that actually matters, work that is not entombed by the walls of the classroom. We break down boundaries between disciplines, between the classroom and ‘the real world,’ and between teacher and student so that we are learners together. By opening the educational experience, the work of students adds value to and has an impact on the wider world. Engaging in multiple open educational experiences created by Cluster Pedagogy supports students in their development of the Habits of Mind and prepares them for success after graduation.”

In making the award, the trustees of the Davis Educational Foundation had strong praise for our Integrated Cluster initiative and our approach to Cluster Pedagogy as “...a bold approach to reimagining the University’s structure and student experience.” More information about participation in the community of teacher-scholars and in the professional development activities will be available in Spring 2019.

## **Recruitment and Enrollment**

### **New First-Year and Transfer**

Fall recruitment travel is wrapping up with the Undergraduate recruitment team’s return to campus for application review. This past fall saw continued year-over-year gains in Open House registrations and attendance numbers when compared to the fall 2017 and 2016 events, but the inclement weather impacted student turn-out for the October 27 event. Upcoming winter events include a Prospective Student-Athlete Open House on Saturday, December 8, and an Open House event on Saturday, February 23. The transfer team has started focusing on completing

spring semester applications as well as working with our admitted students, helping them get to a place where they are comfortable sending in their deposits. While spring semester transfer student applications are down (attributed to fewer transfer applicants from four-year colleges and universities), the transfer team has done a great job of increasing application completion rates from last year, which has resulted in an increase of admits (149 vs. 125) and deposits (79 vs. 62) just after Thanksgiving. The team has also continued its efforts to increase regional partnerships with our New Hampshire Community College partners. The new first-year team began application reading for the fall semester back in October and fall applications have been running 20 percent ahead of last year since mid-November, representing positive student response to continued Integrated Clusters recruitment messaging and/or a shift in college-bound students applying earlier in the cycle.

### **Graduate**

In graduate recruitment, registrations and enrollments for fall hit 1,668, representing the highest fall count since 2012. Fiscal year registrations and enrollments are running 3,897 compared to 3658 year-to-date. Applications for matriculated students are 323 compared to 309 year-to-date and the number of undergraduate students taking graduate courses are 40 compared to 11 last year. Admissions worked with Dr. Chen Wu and observed positive student response and interest in the in-person MBA 4+1 option. Interested students represent a mix of business and non-business majors, some of whom are current athletes who have an additional year of eligibility.

### **Registrar**

The Registrar's Office is gearing up for the multiple fall terms that are soon to be ending, and the grade processing that follows. It is crucial for grades to be submitted by due dates to not halt processing, reporting, appropriate financial aid fund distribution to students, or degree conferrals. Fall semester grade submission deadlines can be found [here](#). The team is also in the midst of processing curricular changes that were approved at the November 16 Curriculum Committee meeting. If you have any approvals, please note that you will be notified when the changes or additions have been completed. The second phase of the CourseLeaf product (automated workflow for curricular changes) is expected to kick off in December.

### **Student Success**

Of late, efforts performed by the success coaches have been dedicated to spring semester advising, along with guiding students in wrapping up the remaining weeks of the fall semester in preparation for final exams. The team continues to work closely with faculty on strategies to best support students while also responding to an observed increase in degree audits for this month. Completion advisors are implementing a faster and more cost-effective approach to the way we communicate Warning, Probation, and Severance information out to students, given the tighter timeline between grades coming out and the start of the spring semester. For new incoming spring students, Orientation will move from a four-day to a two-day experience, where new students will arrive on Sunday, January 20, and engage in Orientation on Monday, January 21, to begin class on Tuesday, January 22. More updates will come as planning efforts continue.

## **Retention and Persistence**

The Retention-Persistence Working Group is partnering with Interim Senior Manager of Institutional Research and Analytics Jim Miller to develop a method that allows the entire campus to see how retention and persistence initiatives are succeeding. While it is under development, we envision that the tracker will be divided into main categories (such as onboarding, residential life, student success (advising), [CARE](#), etc.) with the efforts listed in each. Information for each effort will include contacts for each initiative, metrics used and results, recent communications (through links), and important dates. We welcome information on your efforts as well; please contact [Marcia Schmidt Blaine](#).

## **Sustainability/Thriving financially, academically, and reputationally**

### **University Advancement**

#### **Development**

Plymouth State's Day of Giving was a huge success. As part of #GivingTuesday a Global Day of Philanthropy, we are proud to report that we have raised \$58,812.18 and counting. We received 618 gifts from 505 donors. Over 90 students participated in the day, spending many hours on the phone, texting, e-mailing, and handwriting notes. Close to 400 handwritten asks with pledge cards are in the mail and we anticipate that gifts will continue to come in as alumni and friends receive those personalized and compelling handwritten messages. Beyond the dollars raised, it was an incredible step forward in building a culture of philanthropy within our student population. It was a team effort, so thank you to all who helped make the day possible with your hard work in advance, your efforts remotely throughout the day, and your generous philanthropy. A special thank you to Director of Annual Giving Ava Tyler '14, '17MBA for leading this record-breaking day of support for Plymouth State students.

Michael Dionne '88 has generously pledged \$10,000 to the Innovation & Entrepreneurship Cluster Scholarship Fund to provide scholarships for undergraduate PSU students with a major in the Innovation & Entrepreneurship Cluster and who are New Hampshire residents with documented financial need. This is the first gift to a Cluster-based scholarship.

Many faculty and staff have assisted with engagement opportunities for Plymouth State alumni and friends to philanthropically support Plymouth State University. We recognize and thank a few of our many colleagues who partnered with University Advancement last month: George Pettinico for his efforts with Business Alumni and Student Gathering, Brad Allen and Greg Dumont for their work with the President's Council; Bonnie Bechard for her efforts with The Panther Pitch; Cindy Waltman, who met with a generous alumni donor who is interested in financially supporting programs relating to the mental health of our students; and Mike Son, who met with two prospective donors who wanted to tour the laboratories in Boyd Hall.

### **Marketing Communication and Creative Services (MCCS)**

Working closely with Enrollment Management and our integrated marketing agency, MCCS

developed a new “acceptance notification package” that is arriving now in accepted students’ homes. The new package is a branded tube mailer with the words “It’s a Yes” printed on the outside. Inside this unique package is the acceptance letter, financial aid information, and a PSU poster that can be used to take a ‘selfie’ and share on social media. We are getting positive responses from accepted students and their families.

We are finalizing plans for our 2019 Base Camp ski and snow marketing campaign. Once again, we will be utilizing our student ski and snowboard clubs to market PSU to high school students and their families at the area ski resorts. We will be setting up a satellite admissions Base Camp in the lodge at Waterville Valley Resort and promoting the campaign throughout New England and the Boston-metro area.

The internal communications audit is now underway. Brodeur Partners held focus groups with students, faculty, and staff on campus November 26 and 27. In addition, a campus-wide survey was sent to the PSU community. Results and recommendations from this audit will be presented to campus during the upcoming January Jamboree.

### **Career Development**

Career Development, in collaboration with team members in University Advancement, hosted our Fall Opportunities Fair on Wednesday, November 7, with more than 65 employers (half of whom were alumni) and over 200 students in attendance. A special thank you to Denise Hutchins and her students from Event Marketing for volunteering for this event. We will be looking ahead to the model and frequency of career fairs for the next academic year. Our spring semester fair is set to be held on Wednesday, March 20, from noon–3 p.m.

Career Development is in the process of hiring an assistant director for career development as well as a graduate assistant. PSUnite continues to be a key focus for Career Development and Alumni Relations as we move forward to a comprehensive successful launch in fall 2019, matching each incoming first-year student with an alumni or friend mentor. Faculty and staff interested in serving as a mentor can text PSUnite to 51555 or visit [PSUnite](#).

### **Alumni Relations**

Alumni Relations hosted an alumni breakfast gathering at the annual NHAHPERD conference in Waterville Valley on November 16, and a quarterly PSUAA Board of Directors meeting on December 1 where alumni chapter volunteers attended and participated in a volunteer training program in the afternoon. The Panther Business Club will host a holiday gathering for all alumni at City Winery in Boston on December 4.

Career Development, Academic Affairs, Institutional Research/IT, the Registrar’s Office and Alumni Relations are updating a Senior Outcome and First Destination Survey. The goals of this survey include: feedback and overall satisfaction on their student experience; and employment data allowing updates through six months after graduation. First Destination/Career outcome questions are among the top questions inquiring families are asking Enrollment Management and

are essential to allow us to remain competitive in Admissions. We plan to follow the survey up with focus groups to dig deeper into areas of opportunity, and to use the responses to provide targeted services for those seniors actively engaged in their career search.

U.S. Senators Shaheen and Hassan were on campus to celebrate the grand opening of the new TRIO offices in Speare on November 2. Senate staffers from both offices have visited the PSU TRIO program in the past few months and learned from it. Both senators are strong advocates for federal TRIO funding and continue to work to make sure the allocated money is being spent the way Congress intended. When there was a threat to cut TRIO funding, they helped lead the fight to put the money back into the omnibus spending bill—in fact, Congress ultimately increased TRIO funding by 6 percent. PSU’s TRIO program is particularly successful and worthy of attention: in 2017–2018, our TRIO had an 88 percent persistence rate from year to year; 81 percent graduate in six years; and, most importantly, 97 percent of participants were in good academic standing. Congratulations to Patti May and all the TRIO staff and students.

On October 24–27, Patti May (PASS Office) attended the College Reading and Learning Association (CRLA) Annual Conference in Albuquerque, NM. CRLA is a group of student-oriented professionals active in, among other things, tutoring and mentoring. Since these components make up a large portion of the services provided by the PASS Office and TRIO Student Support Services grant, attendance at the conference allowed for the exploration of best practices and potential new initiatives in helping students achieve their goals of earning a postsecondary education.

On November 1, Dr. Sonja Ardoin shared her research on the challenges rural, first-generation, and/or working-class students face in their transition to and through college and how our campus can be not just student-focused but also “student ready.” She also helped us begin to break down the stereotypes some have of rural students. The event was jointly sponsored by the Community College System of New Hampshire-NH Humanities Collaborative and the University System of New Hampshire as part of the statewide Purpose First initiative. It was a significant professional development opportunity for faculty and staff.

On November 2, Chris Lee (PASS Office) took seven TRIO Scholars on an educational and cultural trip to Boston and Salem, MA, where they visited the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, toured the graduate school at Salem State University, and visited the Salem Witch Museum.

In mid-November, many of us filled the Merrill Place Conference Center to see the presentation by Holocaust survivor and author Marion Blumenthal Lazan. For those of you who were unable to hear the story of this remarkable and courageous woman, you may view it at [www.kaltura.com/tiny/vcwm9](http://www.kaltura.com/tiny/vcwm9) .

Thanks to the efforts of students, faculty, staff (retired and active), and alumni, Plymouth State provided Thanksgiving baskets to more than 450 people living in nine towns of the greater Plymouth area this year. This was the 45<sup>th</sup> year that the University provided this service to the community that hosts it. Donations from faculty, staff, and Phi Beta Upsilon alumni made the project possible. Reflection & Spiritual Care Center student workers took the requests by phone.

Phi Beta Upsilon alumni and active brothers packed the baskets. They, along with members of the following student organizations, delivered the baskets: Athletic Training Student Organization, Catholic Campus Ministry, Kappa Delta Phi NAS, Social Work Club, Stamping Out Stigma, and Women's Lacrosse team. Kathy Tardif of Catholic Campus Ministry coordinated the project, in collaboration with Professor Emeritus Larry Spencer, representing the United Campus Ministry board; Kelly Sundberg Seaman, Episcopal chaplain to PSU; Kirsten Perry and Michael Woodman of Chartwells dining services; Mary Hill of Events and Conference Planning; and Amanda Hutchins of UPD.

Please note that the first-ever First-Year Seminar Wicked Problems Symposium will occur on Wednesday, December 5, at 5:30 pm in ALLWell North. First-Year Seminar students will present their solutions to their assigned Wicked Problems and take questions from the campus community. There will be shuttles running to ALLWell North immediately after Wednesday's Faculty Meeting.

Please remember to hold January 16–17 on your calendars for the 2019 January Jamboree. We may not use both days, but we have started the planning and a tentative schedule will come out soon. The overall theme is Cluster Pedagogy and we want to use the Jamboree as a launching point for ongoing professional development for faculty and staff (and students) throughout the spring semester and beyond. There will be some focused workshop sessions on specific topics and opportunities for open, broad-based conversations about techniques, approaches, tools, support, and more that are central to success in teaching and learning in the Cluster environment. There will also be a distinct track in the Jamboree for staff.

With the holidays around the corner, I wish you all a relaxing and rejuvenating time with friends and family. I hope to see you today at the Holiday Luncheon from Noon– 2 p.m. in Heritage Commons to share some good cheer as we reflect on our successes.

Peace,



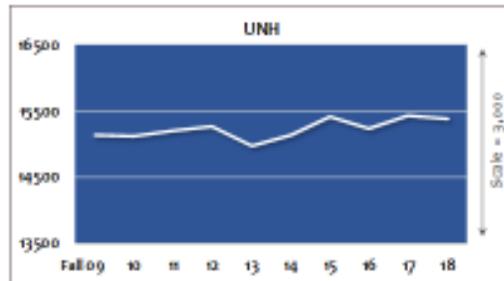
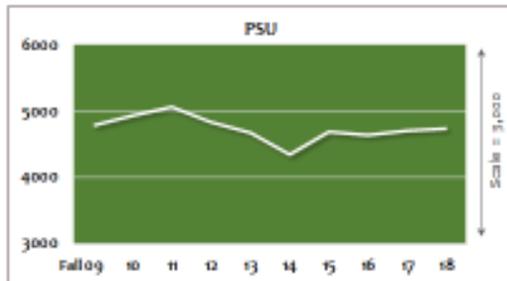
Don Birx  
President

## System-level Operating Margin Historical to Date

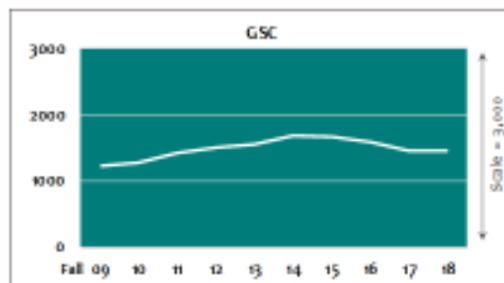
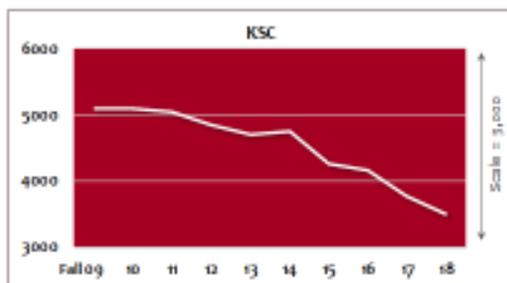


Source: Controller's Office

## Fall 2018 Enrollment FTE – All Incoming & Continuing



Excludes School of Law



Data from campus institutional research Offices. FTE as calculated by each institution.