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President's Monthly Report to Campus March 2019

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PRESIDENT'S MONTHLY REPORT TO CAMPUS

March 2019

Dear Colleagues,

As I write this, daylight savings time is just 12 days away with spring soon to follow, but it sure doesn't feel like it. It has been an interesting winter with several significant challenges, including power outages, water interruption, and flooded/frozen parking lots. We have experienced a variety of tough situations along with the weather-related delays and closures, and I'm always grateful for the determination, creativity, and resiliency of our campus community.

Here are a few highlights from this report:

- Many thanks to all of those across campus who helped mitigate the flooding at the Ice Arena lot and associated parking challenges. The Town of Plymouth was very helpful and understanding in allowing some street and parking in town lots.
- We're working to find a long-term solution as we look at several options with the Army Corps of Engineers.
- While the power outage last weekend—caused when an electrical surge from the New Hampshire Electric Co-op fried one of the main trunk lines through campus (disrupting backup power as well)—was a challenge for everyone on campus, our outstanding crew led by Steve Foster had everything up and running less than 24 hours later. Residential Life, Building Services, UPD, ITS, and Communications teams worked together all weekend to keep students warm, safe, fed, and informed.
- We hosted a reception for first-year students who achieved the President's List. Over 60 shared their First-Year Seminars and other experiences, including the highs and lows of beginning college, and are quickly becoming part of the fabric of our community.
- The Student Senate meets in the HUB every Sunday evening at 6 p.m., and I'm constantly impressed by the group's professionalism and commitment to their jobs, our campus, and their fellow students. I highly recommend dropping in on one of their meetings—guests are always welcome.
- Ski Day was a great success (as was the whole of Winter Carnival) with a record number of students (over 1,400) traveling to Waterville Valley for the day.
- Over the course of the last few weeks we have participated in multiple legislative briefings over our budget request and support has been strong.
- Governor Sununu highlighted PSU in a speech he gave to state senators and he has included \$8 million of our request in his budget. Letters of support from the governor can be found [here](#) and [here](#).

- The PSU Democrats hosted U.S. Senator Elizabeth Warren’s visit to our campus with a packed audience.
- Robin DeRosa has been holding Cluster Pedagogy sessions over the last few weeks and attendance has been good—even at the late Friday afternoon session that I attended.
- There was a good turnout at the Open House, which brought 158 students/families to campus at the end of February compared to 148 last year and 71 in 2017. Thanks to the many faculty and staff members who participated.
- Applications continue to exceed last year and the student pool has the highest average grade point average in recent history, but we need to work to convince them this is the place to be.
- We are developing a model for affinity-based housing for next year, including quiet and scholar floors.
- We continue to be on budget. Thanks to everyone for helping us stay on track.
- We are working toward hiring a new leader for GEO in this much needed area.
- Annual Giving is up almost 20 percent over last year and continues a growth trend.
- Career Development and Alumni Relations are launching the PSUnite First-Year Mentoring program.
- Marketing Communications and Creative Services (MCCS) and the Campus Transition Leadership Team (CTLT) are working to implement the communication plan recommendations.
- Our student athletes continue to work hard both in and outside the classroom with some amazing results.
- We’ll be including a section on Greek life and Clusters in the next report.

Please read further for more details about the remarkable work ongoing here at Plymouth State.

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

With the goal of allowing Clusters to serve as innovation centers, academic programs have been organized into academic units (AUs), and all programs have been assigned to an AU. The whole purpose of this AU “working structure” is to remove structure roadblocks, moving many of the administrative functions as possible to the AUs and allow us to focus on Cluster Pedagogy and curricular evolution in the Clusters. In many cases there is an alignment between Clusters and underlying AUs and in fact are one and the same and that is great but keep in mind that programs and faculty are free to affiliate with any Cluster, ensuring that Clusters provide a space where faculty of shared interests can develop innovative, integrated curriculum and Cluster initiatives that bring students, faculty, and staff together. Personally, I believe that as our Cluster Pedagogy evolves so will our structure.

Many thanks to the excellent work of the Curriculum Committee. In February it reviewed 144 proposals. Courses reviewed represented efforts to ensure high-impact learning opportunities. New programs approved by the curriculum committee for faculty review (majors, minors, certificates)

represent exciting cross-Cluster, cross-discipline, or innovative program re-conceptualization. They include:

- Computational and Applied Mathematical Sciences, with options in biology, chemistry, criminal justice, weather analysis, physical meteorology, and psychology
- The Post-Bachelorette Educator Preparation Program, which allows undergraduate students to meet teacher certification requirements in one year. Current programs included in the model include math and sciences. This program is a cross-Cluster initiative in partnership with our K–12 partners.
- A Standardized Patient minor, which provides training for students to serve as patients for allied health programs. These students work with physical therapy, nursing, and counseling to help peers in these programs develop assessment and intervention skills.
- The Medical Sales Certificate, which prepares students to work in the fast-growing medical device sales industry. This includes courses delivered by business, health and human performance, and nursing.
- Public Health is a reformulation of Health Education and Promotion. The overarching goal of public health is to prevent disease and promote health. This program draws from courses across Clusters including HHE, TESD, and Exploration and Discovery.
- Human Services Leadership is an integration of two graduate majors, personal and organizational wellness and human relations, into a new major that provides students the opportunity to develop the skills needed to be successful leaders in human services contexts. This program meets regional workforce needs and provides 4+1 opportunities for PSU students.

The Open Learning and Teaching Collaborative (CoLab) headed by Robin DeRosa opened its doors in January and is actively engaged in:

- supporting PSU faculty and staff as they design student-centered educational environments with special emphasis on interdisciplinarity, project-based learning, and open education;
- developing practical and creative possibilities for pedagogical innovation within an integrated academic environment;
- inspiring a national conversation about how to build accessible, empowering, and sustainable public learning ecosystems for the twenty-first century.

The CoLab, with support provided by the Davis Foundation, is kicking off a year-long professional development series that will run from May 2019 to May 2020. At its heart is the Cluster Pedagogy Learning Community (CPLC), which will be a dynamic and emergent initiative designed to support current pedagogy-related University projects, align campus efforts to innovate around curriculum and instruction, and refocus institutional efforts on teaching and learning.

The curriculum and practices of the CPLC will focus on three currently-identified aspects of Cluster Pedagogy: interdisciplinary learning, open learning, and project-based learning. All funding will go

toward compensating faculty and staff for their time as we engage in this work together. We plan to offer funding to approximately 60 PSU employees in this first year of the CPLC, and we hope that many PSU faculty and staff will be involved in the design and facilitation of the curriculum. The deadline to apply for this funding is 9 p.m. on Friday, March 8.

Applicants will choose between three tracks:

- **Main CPLC Track:** this is the main track in which everyone funded will participate. In addition to projects and curriculum throughout the year, it includes one meeting each during S19 Final Exams and F19 University Days, as well as two half-day sessions over the summer (June 4 and July 30).
- **Tackling a Wicked Problem Track:** for faculty teaching “Tackling a Wicked Problem,” this track includes the main CPLC series, but also includes longer sessions on June 4 and July 30.
- **Open Education Ambassador Track:** for those who submit an Open Education Instructional Challenge, this track includes the main CPLC series, but also requires attendance at the USNH Academic Technology Institute, May 28–30, 2019.

More information on this exciting initiative can be found [here](#).

We continue to invest in professional development to support our General Education vision and assessment of our Habits of Mind outcomes. Cathie LeBlanc and Brigid O’Donnell recently attended the AAC&U General Education Assessment Conference, and we have applied to send a team to the summer Institute of Project-Based Learning, an annual event held at the Worcester Polytechnic Institute in collaboration with the AAC&U.

Recruitment and Enrollment

Undergraduate Recruitment

Total applications for fall 2018 exceeded 7,000 compared to 6,000 last year, and going into the last week in February the number of admission offers was ahead of last year, 6,000 to 4,700. Now, do more applications and admission offers mean more students will come? Not necessarily. Three years of Integrated Clusters recruitment messaging combined with recruitment strategy shifts have led to the recruitment of an admit pool representing a 65 percent increase YTD in the number of students demonstrating a high school GPA between 3.25 to 4.0 when compared to last year. Anecdotally, this increase in academic quality means Admissions is competing to enroll students who may have more college choice options, making this recruitment cycle the most competitive one yet. On the other hand, PSU is in a great position to engage in recruitment conversations with far more students than in prior years.

As for upcoming recruitment events, Accepted Students Days are scheduled for Monday, April 1; Monday, April 15; Friday, April 19; and Monday, April 22. The *Panther for a Day* visit program, where an admitted student can visit and shadow a current PSU student, is now in its third year.

At R+30, the number of new undergraduate students enrolled was 125 compared to 111 last year and the total undergraduate enrollment was 3,880, representing a continued upward trend and the highest spring undergraduate enrollment in over five years.

Graduate Recruitment

While graduate matriculated enrollments are 847 compared to 931 last year, the total matriculated and nonmatriculated registrations and enrollments for spring are 1,662 compared to 1,589. Total fiscal year registrations and enrollments are currently 4,534 compared to 4,492. Applications for FY 2020 are 34 compared to 19 YTD. Throughout the month of March, the Grad Admissions team will be focused on hosting Zoom/Online information sessions; on-spot Admissions Decision events; Application Workshops; social media program promotion on Facebook and Instagram coordinated with MCCS; and constructing a Graduate Student Orientation.

Student Success

Coaches will soon be preparing for preregistration advising. Strategic projects that the student success coaches are working on include setting up logistics to launch the next iteration of the Summer Ascent bridge program (more details will be forthcoming), and performing outreach to academic programs to include faculty representation in reviewing and implementing action steps proposed from a summer project that reviewed advising (presented at University Days—*Revising Advising: A Proposed Integrated Advising Model to Support the Student Journey*). Also, the office is currently hosting Student Success Awareness sessions (February 26–March 27) for all students who feel that they could benefit from our academic and support services. E-mail notification began running at the end of February.

Registrar

Two major areas of focus for the Registrar's Office include entering approved curriculum proposals/changes into DegreeWorks, and working to make programmatic improvements to DegreeWorks based on reported nuance concerns, errors, and inaccurate information observed (with the last Faculty/Staff Degree Works session to be held on Wednesday, March 6 from 1–2 p.m. in HUB 109). Also, the Registrar's Office is engaged in course scheduling for summer and fall 2019.

Retention and Persistence

Career Development, in collaboration with Alumni Relations, continues preparations for the full launch of the PSUnite First-Year Mentoring program. The conclusion of the first-round pilot provided instrumental feedback to help advance and meet the goals of PSUnite for our mentors and mentees, and we concluded phase two of the pilot on February 28 with a group of alumni and current students. Work is ongoing weekly with the Admissions and Student Success teams to ensure appropriate messaging to our incoming students as well as integrating the launch and match to mentors as part of new student orientation. To learn more and follow PSUnite, click [here](#). As always, we welcome faculty and staff to serve as first-year mentors; please text PSUnite to 51555 to express interest.

The work with EAB, the tracking system, and the Honors Program noted in last month's report is ongoing along with other initiatives that are being discussed. There will be more to share next month.

Sustainability/Thriving Financially, Academically, and Reputationally

The USNH presidents presented the budget request to the House Finance Committee in a formal hearing on February 21, which brought forth good questions. There will be a follow-up hearing with Division II of the House of Representatives, which will develop the formal recommendation back to the full House Finance Committee.

On February 21, I joined in a question and answer session with USNH and the other presidents, which was open to all legislators. This event was scheduled through the Speaker's Office and had a record number of approximately 100 attendees. Many members stayed through to the end of the event and interest was strong.

It was a great opportunity to speak to the value of our institutions and public higher education and provide an overview for new members. Trustee/Representative Marjorie K. Smith was in attendance and asked a question that provided the opportunity for us to really highlight the importance of public institutions of higher education.

Hard to believe but it's presidential primary season in New Hampshire. On Saturday, February 23, the PSU Democrats hosted U.S. Senator Elizabeth Warren's visit to our campus. Nearly 350 members of the PSU and wider Plymouth community attended the event, and several of our students and staff were able to ask questions. It's always an amazing opportunity for our students to be part of New Hampshire's first-in-the-nation primary process and I expect we'll have many more visits by candidates in the next year.

Development

- Nick Vailas '76 pledged a cash gift of \$100,000 toward the construction and equipment of the new Strength and Conditioning Open Lab on the Holderness Campus. Nick has philanthropically supported his alma mater in a host of projects for over 20 years.
- Tom Proulx '75 pledged 25 percent of his trust, which has a conservative value of \$300,000, to the Stadium and Turf Field Project. Tom has philanthropically supported his alma mater for 26 years.
- Ross and Sally Humer established an endowed scholarship in honor of Sally's late father, journalist Joseph F. McCaffrey, with a gift of \$26,000.
- Bill Donohue '93 pledged \$5,000 toward the newly-formed Colorado Alumni Chapter Scholarship, which was founded by Katherine Rhynus Cesark '88.
- Beth and Ron Blankenstein '74 have included PSU in their estate plans. Ron is a former PSU Alumni Associate Board member and the gift will provide scholarship support.
- PSU staff member Matty Leighton has formalized a bequest to PSU for the Women's Circle of Giving Scholarship.

The Annual Giving Team reports that as of February 14, 2019, PSU has secured gifts totaling \$436,579, which is \$70,610 ahead of the same date in FY18. Thank you to all who have joined us in supporting PSU students!

President's Council members and donors are sponsoring tables at The Legacies of Raymond S. Burton '62 and Robert Frost fundraising event on Thursday, March 21, in Merrill Place, to raise funds to support student scholarships. Former U.S. Senator Kelly Ayotte and former Governor John Lynch are the keynote speakers. Individual tickets are also on sale. Please call Christa Hollingsworth to RSVP at ext. 5-3078.

Alumni Relations

Alumni Relations co-hosts several regional and affinity chapter events with our chapter leaders beginning this month. Details for each event can be found on the PSU 25Live calendar and [here](#). Do you have a student interested in career networking in one of the locations of our events? Students are welcome to join and can often carpool with PSU staff to and from the event. Please direct students to alumni@plymouth.edu or call ext. 5-2589 to learn more and to register.

As always, Alumni Relations loves to hear when alumni are visiting campus and having important life events. Getting updates from your former students? Having alumni serve as guest speakers in your classroom? These updates can be featured in *Plymouth Magazine* and their record of volunteer service noted in PSU's alumni database. You will be assisted in making alumni—our former students—feel welcome as they come back “home” to PSU. Send your updates and info to alumni@plymouth.edu.

Career Development

Career Development is excited to share its slate of spring semester 2019 programming. Please visit [here](#) to learn more about our current offerings.

If you are looking to hire a student for an hourly or work-study position for spring semester, please post your position on our centralized job board to support students in searching for on-campus/off-campus opportunities.

Marketing Communications and Creative Services

MCCS is working closely with the Campus Transition Leadership Team and the Office of the President to start the implementation of several of the key recommendations from the Internal Communications Audit. These recommendations and the complete report were shared with campus in February and are available [here](#).

Working closely with the Admissions team, MCCS produced the first of several Facebook Live events aimed at prospective students and their parents. These events cover a variety of topics, including housing, financial aid, and student success. To date, the first one has been viewed by over 1,500 people.

Human Resources recently announced UTime, which pulls together all paid time-off benefits into a single, comprehensive program for both exempt and non-exempt benefits-eligible employees, to meet a wide range of our community needs. These include paid personal and sick time, parental leave, short-term disability, community service and more. Employees will have greater flexibility—and the financial support—to recover from an illness or injury, deal with a personal situation, or help a family member with a serious illness, and then return to work recharged and focused. I hope you had an opportunity to attend an information session; please contact HR or visit [here](#) for more information.

Congratulations to the Men’s Ice Hockey Team for its recent win in the MASCAC semifinals against Worcester State. The incredible shorthanded goal by Matt Volonnino made ESPN’s top 10 best plays at #2 in the country. The team advanced to the championship against Salem State last Saturday here at Hanaway Rink, and they won 3-0. In Skiing, Junior Karl Kuus will represent the East Region at the 2019 National Collegiate Championships at Stowe Mountain Resort from March 6–9 in Stowe, Vermont. Kuus will compete in the giant slalom on Thursday, March 7, with the slalom to be held on Saturday, March 9. Women’s Swimming Junior Casey Allaire claimed the silver medal in three-meter diving to help PSU achieve its best finish in five years on the final day of the 2019 New England Intercollegiate Swimming and Diving Association championships at MIT. Casey was voted Little East Conference Diver of the Year by the league’s head coaches for the second straight year.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Don Birx', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Don Birx
President