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President's Monthly Report [April 2017]

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President's monthly report

Office of the President

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To: Campus Communication <campus-communication@plymouth.edu>;

Dear Colleagues,

It is Sunday evening as I write this and the snow that marked the weekend melted in the spring-like temperatures that followed, and it was a successful and busy weekend all around. Many thanks to all of you who were able to make it in on Saturday to support Accepted Student Day and to the ground crew that was up early in the morning making it possible to open the campus. Given the weather, we had a great turnout.

Things were even in better shape Sunday for National History Day. Kudos to John Krueckeberg and all those involved for holding and supporting this great event on campus each year.

After Governor Sununu's visit during the flood, it was great to see him return for Destination College where I had a chance to meet with him before the event and talk with him about Plymouth. I found him very supportive, and outspokenly so, at the following event with parents and high school students who were in attendance. Shortly thereafter the NH House of Representatives' Public Works and Highways Committee recommended that PSU receive \$3 million in funding to support our cluster initiative, specifically the creation of the home for much of the Health and Human Enrichment cluster within the PE Center to serve needs that range from strength and athletic training to adaptive, outdoor, and basic health and physical therapy needs. This would allow PSU to fill the gap in addressing the health needs of our communities and visitors while enhancing the region economically in partnership with the Tourism, Environment and Sustainability Cluster. This was the only project from USNH that was recommended for funding in this tight financial year. Any chance you get to thank [committee members](#) for supporting this initiative, please do so.

It has been good to see the progress towards implementing clusters. I know for many of us it is too slow or too top down, not directed enough or confusing, not inclusive enough in planning, or following some kind of agenda etc. Trying something new is both confusing and exhilarating at the same time. Although we don't always know the best approaches to implement this cluster framework here, we are in this together, for better or for worse, and I think for so many reasons, it is for the better and we are moving forward. I appreciate all of you who continue to push ahead despite the frustrations and challenges in implementing these concepts while at the same time keeping our traditional activities ongoing.

Some have commented that they feel left out of the clustering process. To those of you who do, I assure you that as the process moves forward everyone will be involved. By its very nature, much of the work starts with the undergraduate faculty, but will grow quickly to involve the graduate faculty (in 4 +1, cluster and professional programs at the graduate level), student affairs and retention (living learning laboratories built around the clusters and integrated into Merrill Hall etc.) and facilities (cluster homes such as those being designed for Health and Human Enrichment in the PE building, Arts and Technology in D&M, and Innovation and Entrepreneurship in Hyde – more to follow on this). Finance is organizing around service centers and teams will be forming shortly for administration of the clusters. So we will all be getting into the act. Even Sodexo is working to organize dining operations around clusters.

On the other fronts, the students have presented a plan for renovating the HUB Hage Room to include a Pub and gathering area. It would preserve the use of the space for meetings like we have currently, but it would open up a venue for pizza, live bands and beer and wine on campus. Included in the concept is a plan to create a deck area on the existing roof.

I was reminded recently that graduate programs are a very important part of our future and I applaud the efforts to integrate better the undergraduate and graduate programs and faculty as well as the calendar and finances.

Financially we continue to perform well in the short-term with one-time funding and a positive margin again this year. However, the long-term prospects are still challenging (due to the compounding effects from the discount rate).

Finally, we are close to a much improved agreement between the town and the university, and, Merrill place is on schedule and under budget. As you read on, you will find a student centered focus and the cluster projects organization to be driving

forces behind advances in all areas from academic affairs to marketing, enrollment, finance and administration, student affairs, and much more.

Academic Affairs

As of March 22, there were 65 integrated cluster projects approved, both funded and non-funded. The project funding process continues through the upcoming fall semester. Faculty members are encouraged to submit project funding requests for the next academic year now. The next project proposal submittal date is April 14 with the review process continuing through the summer. Faculty working on non-funded projects are encouraged to complete a project plan and report so that we may use outcomes in the data we share with students, parents, the Board of Trustees, and community.

A timeline has been created to aid in our planning and progress as we transform the university to support integrated clusters. We will further develop the timeline, updating and adding detail to the next few years and scoping out three additional years, to paint a fuller picture of our transformation. The most up-to-date [timeline lives here](#) on the Integrated Clusters website.

Over 70 faculty and staff attended the recent campus forum on Wednesday, March 15. We received 160+ concerns from 63 respondents to the survey sent to the campus in advance of the forum asking “When you think of transforming to support integrated clusters, what keeps you up at night?”. We were able to discuss 10 of those concerns that were of most interest to forum participants and asked participants to indicate what concerns they would be willing to work on. As a next step, an extended group of campus leaders is crafting a sketch of what the cluster leadership and support team model could look like in the future. This group is comprised of guides, department chairs, program coordinators, committee chairs, center directors, staff directors, deans, and other members of cabinet and will incorporate insights from recent forums.

Please remember to hold the following dates for future Campus Forums:

- Tuesday, April 18 from 2:00-4:00 p.m.
- Friday, April 28 from 9:30-11:30 a.m.
- Friday, May 12 from 2:00-4:00 p.m.

Please hold the following dates on your calendar for new faculty orientation, university days, and other events that have been identified:

- August 21-22 – New Faculty Orientation
- August 23-25 – University Days
- August 28-30 – Campus Cluster Events
- August 31 – Department Retreats
- September 1-4 – Panther Days

Enrollment Management

At Spring R+30, total undergraduate enrollment was over 3800 students for a second straight year. Exact numbers were 3822 compared to 3872 in spring 2016; 3544 in spring 2015. We saw a strong response to our new fall 2017 Panther Shadow visit program. Faculty opening their classes to our admitted students and giving them a chance to see a class experience is much appreciated. The next six weeks will be crucial to our yield efforts as we host four more Accepted Student Day events (April 7, April 17, April 21, and April 24). The April 1 event had strong registration numbers maxed to capacity, though the snowstorm affected attendance. Communication efforts, with those who were unable to attend, are in process for registering them in the additional sessions. As mentioned in last month’s report, new recruitment efforts are in-play in response to demographic shifts that have been unfolding throughout the New England states, especially in New Hampshire. Work has begun to develop an inquiry pool for fall 2018 and a recruitment trip to Colorado was held in March, and a trip to California is planned from April 29 – May 6. Strategic marketing and communications activities were launched in both states and new inquiries for fall 2018 have been generating since January. International recruitment trips to establish new collaborative partnerships in China included PSU representatives Dr. Cynthia Vascak, Mr. Chen Wu – Assistant Professor of Economics, Ms. Hui Cao – PSU Graduate Student, and Mr. Jason Moran. Ms. Hui Cao has a personal connection with a vice president at Zhengzhou University, her alma mater, who personally arranged our visit to Henan Normal University, and Xinyang Normal University. All three universities have interest in sending their students to Plymouth State University to pursue global education experiences. Other international recruitment included visits to South Korea, Japan, and Taiwan.

In Graduate Recruitment, work continues in migrating operations and process management to the admissions Customer Resource Management (CRM) system. Program specific communications continue to be built out and launched and some graduate coordinators are working with Admissions to host informational webinars using PSU's new Zoom Video Webinar. Also, the rolling admissions process that was implemented for this first cohort of DPT students has paid off. At the end of March, 24 students accepted their offer of admission and 22 of them have paid their deposit. The remaining six seats will be filled from the 23 additional students who have participated in the on-campus interview process.

Finance and Administration

Based on February 28 data, we project to have a 2.4% margin after self-funding \$1.6m in strategic cluster and restructuring operating expenses. The positive margin is largely the result of the same two reasons presented in previous projection report and reiterated below:

- a) thoughtful replacement hires has resulted in significant one-time savings (some of which is being reinvested back into PSU through one-time expenditures, primarily those aimed at having a student impact.)
- b) ongoing careful consideration of restructuring/cluster investments and what is required as non-capital vs capital support

We continue to make these strategic decisions as it is well aware of the continued financial pressures to be felt in the coming years as the higher discount rates for our incoming classes continue to compound. We are seeking the Board's support to reinvest the additional dollars generated from the 2.4% margin surplus in FY18 and FY19 on capital infrastructure needs.

Financial Service Centers

Over the coming weeks, the Financial Services Team will be bringing its "roadshow" to various constituent groups. Our goal is to inform the campus about the upcoming changes being implemented through Central Finance at PSU. Topics will include changes to our Chart of Accounts and implementation of the Financial Service Centers. These sessions will offer an opportunity for our team to provide updates and answer any questions you may have. We will be reaching out to schedule presentations but feel free to contact [Tom Weeks](#) or [Laurie Wilcox](#) to request a visit.

Environmental, Health & Safety

Please welcome Paul Brochu to the Office of Environmental, Health and Safety and the Finance & Administration team. Paul started on March 27 as an Environmental, Health & Safety Coordinator for the campus. Paul's primary responsibilities include a combination of laboratory and biological safety, as well as chemical safety and environmental compliance. Paul will also provide assistance to the EHS Manager with implementing campus-wide regulatory requirements and best management practices. He is responsible for managing the University's Chemical Emergency Management System program and Safety Data Sheets.

Events and Conference Planning

Events and Conference Planning (E&CP) enthusiastically welcomes Mary Hill to their team. She was instrumental in collaborating with our ITS colleagues and launching our new campus [events calendar](#), which is now accessible from the Quick Links at the bottom of the PSU [homepage](#). E&CP is charging forward with assessing and evaluating our current room rate structure and policies to maximize resources, generate new revenue streams, and ensure best practices while improving cost containment and the overall student experience. We ask our campus colleagues to support these efforts and enter all room requests through [25Live](#).

Physical Plant

Despite what seemed like an endless barrage of snow and ice storms this winter, we are happy to report that our construction teams have continued to plow forward on the following PSU projects:

Merrill Place

We continue to remain on track and on budget, and expect to open for student housing for the 2017 fall semester. Windows have been delivered and installation is underway, and we will soon see the white insulated wrapping around the building removed. Tile and Millwork have been started at the lower levels, as well as drywall and tapping up to the 4th floor. Mechanical, electrical and plumbing continue as scheduled.

P.E. Center Roof Replacement

In general, the project includes the replacement of approximately 4,700 sf of roof membrane, insulation and associated roof curbs, flashings, fascia and reconditioning of roof drains. The contractor is scheduled to begin on-site work May 22, 2017 and bring the project to substantial completion no later than August 18, 2017.

Hyde 120/220 Renovation

Rooms 120 & 220 will remain sloped, but with tiered platforms that are deeper (making for a less-steep slope), allowing for more flexible furniture arrangements (including moveable furniture in 120), thereby facilitating a more collaborative learning environment. The tiered platforms also allow for multiple wheelchair patron vantage points within both lecture halls than currently is possible today, accessed from new, multiple ramp locations for both rooms. The project is to begin at the end of May 2017 and be completed by mid-August 2017.

Speare Student Service Center

The Speare Student Service Center will be an administrative hub, providing the offices, services, resources, and staff needed to ensure that students can take care of business efficiently. The departments that will be occupying the building are: Student Account Services, Financial Aid, Registrar, Advising/Career, Residential Life, PASS and Global Engagement. The project will begin this summer with the assumption that it will be completed by the beginning of the new academic year.

Information Technology Services

Information Technology Services (ITS) has two new employees on their team – Kari (JP) Vainio and Harish Nandipi. Both of these gentlemen work in the applications and development group, and the skills transfer necessary to get them up to speed has already begun. Nathan Porter (we all know him as “Porter”) is making a well-earned transition to database administrator within the same applications and development group.

ITS teams are working on a multitude of projects and have been putting priorities together for the cabinet to review and confirm with the overarching theme being the ability to place the right people, skill sets, and resources in the right place, at the right time. ITS views everyone at PSU to be their client and they are working hard to get through a backlog of items and stay on top of the ever-changing and ever-growing needs of Plymouth State. Don't forget that the best way to reach the appropriate ITS technologist is through the [Help Desk](#), by [email](#) or 603-535-2929.

Student Affairs

As students returned from spring break, student leaders were busy preparing for an active six weeks filled with student body elections, organization officer transitions, student activity fee allocations, and annual campus events in April and May such as Game On Icon, Drag Show, Earth Jam, and Spring Fling. The senior class is becoming particularly active in these weeks leading to graduation as they prepare for two class trips, senior week activities (May 8-12), convocation awards & commencement activities.

In March, students, faculty and staff engaged in dialogue at forums in the HUB Fireplace Lounge, discussing feminism on International Women's Day, and how to better our campus community. Consider joining our students for forums on the state of education (April 5), race at PSU (April 12), and the environment (April 19).

As part of Student Affairs restructuring, we are currently searching for a Director of Residence Life and Dining Services, and expect to post a position for Director of Student Engagement and Programming soon.

The Center for Student Success has had quite a productive semester so far and we are very appreciative of the collaboration we have had with many departments around campus. While much is going on, here are a few highlights:

- The TRIO scholars program sponsored a community service trip, led by Chris Lee, to North Carolina over spring break.
- The [online job opportunities board](#) is live and ready for our students. Employment opportunities will be posted as well as internship and volunteer opportunities on this site. Please visit the site and encourage your students to check it out.
- The Disability Services office has been holding professional development sessions on topics that can help us all work better with our students who need accommodations or simply a different approach to learning and living on campus. Keep a look out for more sessions and send any thoughts to [Lindsay Page](#) as to what you may want to learn more about in the student disability services arena.
- The Student Success Coaches have been offering extra assistance to those students who had low six week grades. Fall '17 registration is starting and we are eager to help set our students up for a successful sophomore experience.
- A Center for Student Success retreat was held in March, in an effort to learn from what was done this year and to prepare and improve for next year, while establishing the center's core values. The center plans to share with the campus what will drive student success in the future.

To provide greater levels of support to our first year students we are starting a faculty/staff mentoring program for first year students. We will be taking applications over the spring and summer, while starting the relationship support during Panther Days in August.

University Advancement

Development team asks that you mark your calendars for **June 6 and 7 as Plymouth State will once again participate in NH Gives Day—New Hampshire’s annual day of Philanthropy.** MobileCause, the text-to-give platform, continues to provide our alumni and friends with a user-friendly giving vehicle. Our frontline fundraisers are using this tool to secure donations, and we’ve partnered with Athletics to test popular crowdfunding aspects of this platform in the next few months.

Alumni Relations continues to host events to build alumni chapters that engage our alumni in support of the integrated clusters including recent events in The Villages, Tampa, and Fort Myers, Florida. PSU has 800+ alumni living in Florida, some seasonal, some year-round residents. They are eager to be engaged for professional networking and in support of their alma mater.

Upcoming events:

April 6 – NYC Alumni Chapter gathering, Omni Berkshire Midtown
April 13 – Greater Manchester Alumni event
April 30 – HHP Alumni event
June 6 – Seacoast Alumni Chapter event

Save the date for Homecoming & Family Celebration and Reunion Weekend, September 22-24. This includes the 37th annual PSUAA Barbara Dearborn '60 Golf Classic on September 24 at Waukegan Golf Club, Center Harbor, NH. Start getting your foursome ready for a great day out on the links raising money for student scholarships.

Marketing Communications and Creative Services (MCCS) launched the multi-site version of the website and is providing access to users across campus. MCCS will host training sessions for those who need support crafting content for external audiences and marketing their program. Details about dates, times and locations for the marketing sessions will be coming shortly. Information Technology Services (ITS) will provide WordPress training for those who are new to editing the site or who need a refresher.

In support of Enrollment Management, MCCS has begun the communication journey with the class of 2022 and are continuing to support yield efforts on the class of 2021.

The next issue of Plymouth Magazine will hit mailboxes early June, with highlights of some of the great cluster work so many have been involved in.

Athletics

Join me in celebrating some of the achievements of our student athletes with many thanks to our dedicated faculty and staff:

- Ryan Stevens, the leading scorer on the men's ice hockey team was selected to the New England Hockey Writers Association 2016-17 Men's Division II/III All-Star Team.
- 11 student-athletes from the women's ice hockey team made the New England Hockey Conference All-Academic Team for the 2016-17 season. These athletes had to have completed at least one academic year at the institution and must have a cumulative grade point average of at least 3.0.
- 29 Little East Conference winter student-athletes from the men's and women's basketball, women's swimming & diving and men's and women's indoor track & field teams earned recognition on the All-Academic Teams based on the following criteria: at least a sophomore academic and athletic standing, a minimum of a 3.3 cumulative grade point average, a full-time member of the team, and enrolled in the institution for at least a full academic year.
- Sophomore [Joe Aumann](#) was selected to the All-New England Wrestling Association (NEWA) Second Team.
- Sophomore [Matt Froio](#) and freshman [Tom Pagliarulo](#) earned a spot on the Academic All-NEWA Team, which requires wrestlers to have been a major contributor to the team and have over a 3.3 GPA.
- 20 student-athletes from the men's ice hockey team made the Massachusetts State Collegiate Athletic Conference (MASCAC) All-Academic Team on the basis of a minimum 3.20 cumulative or semester grade point average.
- PSU alpine skier Amelia Rowland went to the US National Championship – Amelia transferred to PSU from Harvard.

- Tim Perron of the men's ice hockey team received the sportsmanship award from the MASCAC.
- Track & Field athlete, Sam Brunnette placed 14th in the 3,000 meters race at the NCAA National Championship.
- Ski Team members Karl Kuus placed 11th and Freydis Einarsdottir placed 15th in slalom at the NCAA National Championship.
- Men's Ice Hockey player, Sophomore [Ryan Stevens](#) was named MASCAC First Team All-Star. Senior captain [Michael Economos](#) was named a Second Team All-Star for the third straight year, and was joined on the Second Team by sophomores [Evan Morelli](#) and [Tim Perron](#).

In women's basketball, PSU second-year head coach Allison Flynn was voted by her peers as LEC Coach of the Year. Although spring sports are off to a rough start with the weather, both softball and baseball had successful spring trips to Florida. PSU managed to get a home women's lacrosse game against Castleton. The student-athletes helped with clearing a portion of the Holderness turf field on Thursday, winning 17-3. Please share our many thanks to Holderness for all they have done for us.

Human Resources

We are proud to announce that PSU's own Healthy PSU Program Manager Denise Normandin has been selected by the Wellness Council of America (WELCOA) as one of the TOP 10 Health Promotion Professionals in the nation. Her commitment and passion to innovative health promotion as well as her dedication to her own professional development have contributed to this national recognition. Please join me in congratulating Denise and all who participate in Healthy PSU educational programs, engagements and cluster projects. Healthy PSU has become an award-winning program and recently received the American Heart Association's Fit-Friendly Worksite Innovation Award and the WELCOA's Platinum Well Workplace Designation which demonstrates that we are creating an environment that embraces a culture of health and well-being at PSU.

The Title IX Coordinator is now reporting to the Director of Human Resources. The position, activities, and educational programs will remain embedded within Student and Academic Affairs, but this new reporting structure allows greater access to campus-wide resources and supports a fully integrated approach to addressing civil rights matters on campus.

As we continue to be smart health care consumers, knowing and understanding how our lifestyle choices affect our health risks is extremely important. The University System along with PSU continues to provide employees with the necessary tools and information to make healthy choices easier and more accessible to all employees and their families.

We are pleased to share the following information regarding the 2016 Health Risk Assessment and Biometric Screenings offered at PSU. Thank you to everyone who took part and received the \$400 medical benefits premium credit for your participation.

- 63.6% of PSU benefits eligible employees completed the Cigna Health Risk Assessment in 2016. This is up from 51% in 2015 – representing approx. 25% increase.
- 83.8% of PSU benefits eligible employees participated in the on-site biometrics screenings in 2016. This is up from 61% in 2015 – representing a 37.5% increase.



PSU was proud to host a regional public hearing of the NH House Finance Committee on March 6 as the committee considered its version of the state operating budget. The committee has completed its work and the full House will vote on the House version of the budget proposal this week. The House proposal retained the governor's level funding recommendation for the University System of New Hampshire for FY18 and FY19. The capital and operating budget recommendations go on to the Senate following the House vote. PSU has worked to increase our numbers of advocates and will keep them informed regarding both the PSU transformation and the budget process, with action requests as needed to those who have indicated they are willing to speak out on our behalf.

PSU's Executive Director of Government Relations [Marcia Schmidt Blaine](#) has begun to reach out to members of the state legislature to keep them up to date on what is happening at PSU. Faculty and staff who have contact with legislators should let Marcia know as well. Many thanks for the answers faculty and staff give when PSU is asked to provide information about pending legislation. The legislative process can move very quickly and your quick responses allows us to have a positive role in this process.

PSU will host **Congresswoman Annie Kuster on April 19 at 11:00 a.m. in Frost Commons** as she recognizes Sexual Violence Awareness Month with an interactive conversation on the topic between students and key stakeholders. Please make your

students aware of this opportunity. |

As a reminder, Change Consultant, Howard Teibel, principal of Teibel, Inc., will return to campus April 11-12. He will conduct a series of discussions for faculty and staff that focus on team leadership and teamwork with respect to evolving a successful cluster organization. Staff from any part of campus, whether working with clusters yet or not, are urged to attend those individual cluster meetings (i.e. departmental administrative assistants, Admissions liaisons, etc.). There's nothing that says you can only attend one session, but the primary focus will be the clusters indicated for each particular meeting. If you have a question for Mr. Teibel that you would like to submit for group discussion, please forward to psu-presidentsoffice@plymouth.edu so that Mr. Teibel may prepare in advance. Supervisors, please support faculty, PAT, and OS participation in these meetings.

Sincerely,

Don

Don Birx
President