

President shares goals for Millersville University

HIGHER EDUCATION

Aims to take on challenges and increase affordability, 4-year graduation rates, add in-demand programs

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In an interview with the LNP Editorial Board on Wednesday, Millersville University's president wasn't shy about the challenges that lie ahead for the nearly 8,000-student state school.

Affordability, higher education funding, and improving retention and graduation rates are among Daniel Wubah's priorities as he continues his second year steering the ship at Millersville.

But Wubah, who's also a tribal king in his native Ghana, was quick to praise the university for its innovations in technology and sustainability.

Here are five takeaways from our conversation with Millersville's 15th president.

Affordability

Pennsylvania lawmakers appropriated nearly \$1.4 billion toward higher education in the 2019-20 budget. With so many institutions with their hands in the pot — 32, including the 14 Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education universities, four staterelated institutions and 14 community colleges — Wubah said it's not enough.

This has led to rising tuition and increasing student debt loads.

The university also is taking advantage of a new state system rule that will allow universities to set their own tuition as early as fall 2020, Wubah said, adding administrators are investigating the "best price point" for Millersville.

Graduation and retention rates

Millersville students graduate in four years only 36% of the time, which Wubah said is "unacceptable." Most students graduate in five years, despite being only a handful of credits away from graduation, he said, so the university may start waiving credits if it means helping students graduate on time. Wubah said improved advisement as students inch closer to their senior year also is a priority.

Meanwhile, first- to second-year retention rates are in the upper 70s, but Wubah said he wants that percentage up in the mid-80s. Task forces have been set up to study how the university can strengthen student achievement, particularly retention and graduation rates.

In-demand programs

Millersville is in the process of adding eight new programs, four of which were already approved. Wubah said these programs — such as entertainment technology and sports administration — are "directed toward the needs of the local community" and "tailor-made toward industry needs."

This summer, the university started its business college, leaving Cheyney as the lone state university to not have one, Wubah said.

Sustainability As Wubah answered questions in the LNP studio, a bus was traveling to Washington, D.C.,

Millersville \$5,000 a month in energy costs, which Wubah said is being used to fund student sustainability projects in the Lancaster community.

"We have to be the ones who lead this effort," Wubah said.

Food insecurity Food insecurity among college students has gained national attention of late. And Wubah said Millersville is keeping a close eye on the issue.

In addition to providing students in need with food through the Campus Cupboard, located at the neighboring Millersville Community Church, the college is developing an app that will allow students to search where leftover food from the dining halls is available on campus — food, Wubah said, that previously wound up in the garbage.



Millersville University President Daniel Wubah speaks with LNP's editorial board on Wednesday.

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Millersville, whose tuition is currently set by the state, has cut costs for students by reducing dining fees and the cost of books. Wubah said the university granted 10 professors \$1,000 to use online textbooks, saving students \$250,000 last year.

to celebrate the university's newest sustainability recognition. The U.S. Department of Education named Millersville a Green Ribbon School for efforts to reduce its carbon footprint.

The Lombardo Welcome Center remains its top sustainability initiative, Wubah said. The building, which welcomes 100,000 visitors a year, is the first certified zero-energy building — meaning it produces as much energy as it consumes— in Pennsylvania.

The building has saved