

**State of the 'Ville Remarks**  
**Friday, September 6, 2019**  
**4:00 p.m., Clair Performance Hall, Winter Center**

Thank you, Provost Prabhu, for your kind introduction.

This past year, we lost a member of our Marauder family and the Lancaster community. Dr. Rita Smith Wade-El was an esteemed colleague, and a popular community leader. She will be missed, and I'd like us to pause for a moment of silence in her memory.

It is an honor for me to share with you the kickoff of the new academic year. Judith and I have been here for over a year, and we remain confident in our decision to join this wonderful community. We look forward to hosting you at the Garden Supper immediately following my address.

Many of you will remember when this event was known as the "Fall Convocation." Last year, we called it the "State of the University" address; but my staff advocated for a different name because they kept calling it the "State of the Union address." Because we want this time together to be unique to Millersville and to focus more directly on our Marauder spirit, we agreed on a new name. So welcome to the inaugural "State of the 'Ville" address.

First, I want to express my appreciation to everyone here. Members of the Board of Governors, current and former Trustees, faculty, staff, students, alumni, parents, friends, community leaders, and those on online, thank you for taking time from your busy schedules to join us. A special thank you to Representative Michael Sturla, Mayor Richard Moriarty, and Dr. Francine McNairy for being here with us this afternoon.

To our faculty emeriti being honored today, thank you. We are indebted to you for the role you've played in the lives of our students. Congratulations on your well-deserved recognition. I invite you to continue your relationship with Millersville and look forward to seeing you on campus. Please stand and be recognized.

On the opening day of the fall semester last year, I was welcomed by chalk messages on the walkways leading to Biemesderfer. To this day, students greet me with warmth and enthusiasm. Faculty and staff share their passion and energy. Alumni offer me opinions and optimism. Trustees and volunteer leaders inspire me with their time, treasure and talents. Community leaders invite me to envision new partnerships and collaborations. To all of you, thank you for supporting our university.

In April, there was a little event called an "Inauguration," when Judith and I were officially, and ceremoniously, inducted into the Marauder family. The celebration was punctuated by tradition, pageantry, dancing, and singing. We were truly humbled by the outpouring of support, and our Ghanaian family and friends still talk about the warm welcome they received. I am more excited now than ever to lead our University.

As we start this academic year, I can say without a doubt that our university is heading in the right direction. For the rest of our time together, I will share my reflections of the past year and outline our plans and priorities for this academic year and beyond.

Last year, I promised to fill key vacancies and build the leadership team. We conducted two national searches that brought us two excellent colleagues, and I made an additional appointment to my Cabinet. Please give a warm welcome to our Vice President of Advancement, Mr. Victor Ramos, our Chief Diversity Officer, Dr. Felicia Brown-Haywood, and our Chief Technology Officer, Mr. Steven diFilipo. I am pleased to have them on our team.

Once again, our enrollment numbers are strong. Approximately one thousand three hundred and fifty freshmen and 500 transfer students joined us this semester. The average GPA for our freshmen class is 3.43, and the average SAT is 1080.

We welcomed 36 international students, our largest group ever, and our out-of-state enrollment for the incoming class is 9%.

Although our overall retention rate of 77.5% is ranked third among PASSHE institutions, we can do better. Stronger retention and higher four-year graduation rates are key goals for my leadership team, and I am confident that we can make progress in both metrics.

As promised during my remarks last year, I hosted almost 60 listening tours – with faculty, staff, students, alumni and friends of this institution. My goals were to gain valuable insights about our rich history, understand our culture, as well as listen to your hopes and aspirations for our university.

Also during last year's address, I issued several challenges and the outcomes have exceeded my expectations. More importantly, you reciprocated by challenging us to go even further this year. I know we will be up to the task. As I said in my opening day video, **THIS WILL BE A GREAT YEAR FOR ALL OF US!**

Overall, last year was busy and productive for our faculty and staff. Your collective accomplishments are too numerous to mention; please look for the full listing of the highlights in the next issue of the President's Monthly Update.

However, I will like to highlight some of these accomplishments:

Last year I challenged our faculty to develop new academic programs and develop curricula that will enhance our students' skills, so that they will be prepared to fill the gap between what the world needs today and what it will demand tomorrow. You met this challenge and I am grateful for all your efforts.

Collectively, our faculty created 8 new degree programs, and, so far, the Office of the Chancellor has approved three of them.

- BA in Entertainment Technology
- BS in Information Technology with an option in Healthcare Analytics
- BS in Sports Administration

The remaining five programs are pending approval by the Chancellor's Office. We've never created this many programs in such a short time. I congratulate you, faculty, for your creativity and your diligence in shepherding these programs to fruition.

In addition, under the leadership of the Provost' Office, we launched the Tell School of Music last fall, and the new College of Business in July.

This new college will enable us to recruit additional students and educate them to meet the workforce needs of our region and beyond. I would like to recognize the interim Dean, Dr. Douglas Frazer, and the faculty in the departments of Management and Marketing, and Accounting and Finance, for making this vision a reality for our students. Recently, I hosted the inaugural meeting of the College's Advisory Board, which is mainly made up of our successful alumni who are committed to developing a top-notch college.

**SUSTAINABILITY** is rapidly becoming one of our signature identities. I can't speak about sustainability without acknowledging our **Lombardo Welcome Center**. This building generates more energy than it consumes. So, what are we doing with the excess energy and utility rebates produced by this building? We've created the **Positive Energy Fund**. This fund provides grants to our students to address some of the world's most challenging problems.

The initial round of grants were awarded last spring and the projects will benefit Lancaster County.

- Integrating Art into Stormwater Management – Stacy Levy and the City of Lancaster
- Project Green Lancaster – Students in the Media and Broadcasting Program
- Cross-Pollination: Native Gardens & Art in the Schools – Carol Welsh & Elyse Jurgen, College of Education
- Focus on the Community Day

I can say without a doubt that our faculty and students are ready to make a regional impact by living out our EPPIIC value of Public Mission.

Now, let me talk about affordability. Making our high-quality education affordable and accessible to qualified students is one of my major goals. We are currently using several approaches to accomplish this goal. Last year, we made substantial progress in developing strategies to cut cost for our students; let me share a few with you:

First, Dining Services has started a new “declining balance” pricing plan that reduces residential student dining costs by 14%. **And for the first time in our history, Millersville will have a lower total cost of attendance compared to the previous year.** Let me repeat. **For the first time in our history, Millersville will have a lower total cost of attendance compared to the previous year.**

Second, we are making a Millersville education more affordable by using open education resource material, which is virtually free for our students. Our Center for Academic Excellence, in collaboration with the Open Education Resources working group, launched the Open Textbook Initiative which saved our students over \$250,000 last year.

Third, I am committed to increasing the number of scholarships available to our students. During this past academic year, an additional 95 new scholarships were established. We awarded a total of \$3.8 million in institutional and private scholarships and grants to our students.

During last year's address, I pledged to work towards raising funds for scholarships, and over the past twelve months, I've been doing exactly that.

From Lancaster to San Diego and many points in between, Judith and I have met with hundreds of alumni to share our story of access and excellence. I am confident that, in the near future, you will see the results of these efforts.

Last year I challenged our Office of Alumni Engagement to begin tracking how we engage with our alumni. Together, we set a goal of 400 new contacts.

Through events like our Homecoming, the Listening Tours, and MU After Work, along with an increased social media presence, we engaged nearly 12 hundred alumni for the first time. (nearly 3X our goal)

Now, let me tell you about two very special Marauders I met on one of my Listening Tours, Glenn and Louise Julius. Glenn graduated from Millersville in 1963 and Louise graduated in 1964. They are now happily retired from their teaching careers. When they heard about a Listening Tour session in Houston, Texas they hopped in their car and made the 5-hour drive from their home in Arlington to attend.

I had an opportunity to spend some time with Glenn and Louise. They shared their affection for Millersville, the place where they met and fell in love. Both attributed the success of their careers to the education they received here. I was struck by the fact that they are "typical" Marauders, because even years after graduation, this is a place that is near and dear to their hearts. That is the Marauder spirit.

In addition to friend-raising efforts like the Listening Tours, our Advancement Division is also involved in fundraising. Remember, our annual **One Day Give event?**

With a theme of "Give to What You Love," the event was successful. We had fun while giving to what we love! Our university.

Who could forget the socks?!

Not only did we have fun, but together we raised over \$130,000 in 14 hours. Stay tuned for information on the next One Day Give event.

That brings me to our ongoing campaign, the *Imagine the Possible* campaign. I am glad to say that we've made significant progress.

Our goal is to raise \$32 million in private support by June 30, 2020, to assist with three priority areas:

- Scholarships
- Student Learning Experiences
- Athletics.

\$10 million will be used to increase merit and need-based scholarships.

\$16 million will be used for student experiences. This will enable our students to participate in high-impact practices as part of their holistic education.

Finally, \$6 million will be used establish a championship experience for our student-athletes to excel on the field as well as in the classroom.

Allow me to share an example of why the success of the campaign is crucial for Millersville's future. Better yet, I will have Karam tell you.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=69&v=SLpqHp2a4Xw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=69&v=SLpqHp2a4Xw)

Karam is only one of the many talented students who will benefit from our efforts.

As of June 30 of this year, we've raised approximately \$26 million, which is equivalent to 80% of our goal. During the next 9 months, I am going to be on the road to persuade our alumni, friends, supporters, and anyone who will listen to me, to help us reach our goal of \$32 million. Every dollar matters and plays a crucial role in the success of our students.

Now let me talk about partnerships. This past year we established several new partnerships.

Locally, we signed an agreement with Thaddeus Stevens College of Technology. We also signed an MOU with Edward Via College of Osteopathic Medicine in Virginia to facilitate entrance to medical school for our students.

At the global level, I visited some of our partners in China and explored opportunities for future collaborations. I was at Chongqing Normal University, a consortium partner through the AASCU-sponsored program. We also signed agreements with three new partners in China.

We signed an MOU with Academic City College located in Ghana. During a trip to Ghana with Trustee Jordan Harris, I signed MOUs with two universities - University of Cape Coast and the University of Winneba. in one day.

My thanks to Dr. Patriece Campbell and her team in the Office of International Programs and Services for all they do for us in Global Education.

For our new colleagues, you will find out soon that we love to celebrate the success of our Marauder family. And last year we found many reasons to do so.

In early March, we commemorated the 30th anniversary of establishing the President's Commission on the Status of Women. The Commission is an important vehicle that promotes positive empowerment of women. I congratulate the Commission on reaching this milestone.

Later in March, we marked 100 years of women's intercollegiate athletics on our campus. We reflected on and honored the accomplishments of our female athletes. To give you an idea of the growth of this program, in 1964 there were only 4 sports for women; today we have a dozen women's teams.

On May 17, we honored our Marauder family members who had achieved significant milestones in their service to our university. We paid special tribute to Dr. M.P.A. Sheaffer for her 52 years of service at MU. The Marauder Milestones recognition was part of our first-ever All Employee BBQ, an event for faculty and staff to celebrate the end a successful academic year. More than 500 employees attended and, by all accounts, everyone had a great time. I certainly did, and already look forward to next May's event.

One of the proudest moments in my role as president is when external organizations recognize the work of our students, faculty and staff. And we earned many recognitions this past year. I'd like to share a few with you:

Each year, the PASSHE Board of Governors selects the best overall student in the 14-university system to receive the Ali-Zaidi Award for Academic Excellence. Our own Marauder, Erin Jones, was last year's recipient of this award. She earned her Bachelor of Arts degree in meteorology and she is now pursuing a Ph.D. in the School of Meteorology at the University of Oklahoma. This is the fifth time a Marauder has won this award since its inception in 2000, and I am proud to say that no other PASSHE university can claim this accomplishment. Just imagine, a pool of 14 universities and in 19 years one university has won it 5 times! It demonstrates that we have hard-working students who are taught by outstanding faculty.

But don't take my word for it because I have something to support it:

Recently, I received an email from Mr. William Overly, Class of 1977:

*"As an alumnus of the university, I feel I received an affordable, first-rate education. Many of my professors were themselves, graduates of Harvard, Yale and MIT. ... Millersville University is a progressive, forward looking institution which competes well with other respected colleges and universities nationwide."*

Awards and recognitions are wonderful, but such an unsolicited email from an alum is priceless.

We received two awards for sustainability. The International Living Future Institute recognized our Lombardo Welcome Center as the first ZERO-ENERGY building in Pennsylvania. And, we were one of only four post-secondary institutions nationally to receive the Green Ribbon School award by the U.S. Department of Education.

For several years, we've participated in the "It's On Us" campaign to prevent sexual assault on campus, promote bystander intervention, and improve survivor support. Last fall, we focused our second annual campaign on a pledge drive, which garnered 715 signatures. This accomplishment earned us the third place nationally for the highest number of pledges! Our team was also awarded a \$30,000 grant from the state to continue these efforts.

March 9<sup>th</sup> was a red-letter day for two Marauder athletes, who were crowned individual national champions. Sunflower Greene successfully defended her NCAA Division II Indoor Championship in the shot put. On the same day, Shane Ruhnke won the NCAA Division II Championship in wrestling. And I will be remiss if I don't mention our men's soccer team, who won the PSAC Conference title. They have promised to defend this title and plan to bring greater accolades to our university. I thank Coach Widdowson for his leadership.

And our athletic teams are already off to a great start! We are proud of all our student athletes who represent the Black and Gold.

We are also proud of our commitment to campus safety. In fact, we were ranked #6 nationally, and #1 in Pennsylvania by "Your Guide to the Nation's Safest College Campuses." This ranking is the result of our commitment to safety and the hard work of our Police Department.

Now let me talk about our faculty. You are caring and committed, and you were very productive in your disciplines. I draw your attention to the screen where a few of the recognitions that you brought to our campus are highlighted.

Congratulations:

- Dr. Tim Mahoney from Educational Foundations was selected for a Fulbright Fellowship that sent him to the University of Lower Silesia in Poland to work with the International Institute for the Study of Culture and Education.
- Mr. Michael Benevenia from Art & Design received a Fulbright-Nehru Fellowship to work on a project in India.
- Dr. Justin Garcia from Sociology & Anthropology was selected as Fellow for the Japan Studies Institute in the San Diego State University.
- Dr. Gregory Seigworth (Communication & Theatre) was invited to serve as visiting lecturer at Aarhus University in Denmark in summer 2019.

In addition to these awards, recent grants received by our faculty members deserve to be mentioned:

- Dr. Alex Redcay and her team from the School of Social Work were awarded a \$1.35 million grant focused on opioid addiction.
- Dr. Tiffany Wright and her team in Educational Foundations were awarded a \$300,000 grant that provides financial support to teachers who are participating in a two-year principal preparation program.
- Dr. Thomas Neuville received an additional \$500,000 to support inclusive education at Millersville University and to support the development of inclusive education programs on campuses across the Commonwealth, including new efforts at West Chester University and Lehigh Carbon Community College.
- Dr. Sharon Brusica and the Integrative STEM Education Methods Team received the 2019 Gerhard Salinger Award for Enhancing STEM Education through Technological/Engineering Design-Based Instruction.

These examples are just the tip of the iceberg of our faculty's scholarship, and I congratulate all our faculty who received awards and grants. You bring honor and acclaim to yourselves and to our university.

As many of you know, I am committed to the core values of our university – or as we Marauders call them – the EPPIIC values. And if you've heard me speak on campus this past year, you know that it is one of my favorite topics. These values are at the heart of everything we do, and they guide our decisions and actions.

From years of experience, I know that culture and values are far more important than the goals we set and the tactics we employ. Goals can be reset and tactics can quickly change, but our values are our bedrock, and for our community it is our EPPIIC values that will guide us into the future.

Before I share plans for this academic year, let me take a few minutes to highlight examples of how we live our values:

### **EXPLORATION**

We place a high value on student-faculty research, scholarship and collaborative projects. Our Nanotechnology Lab is an example of our commitment to exploration. This is a unique space where faculty and students collaborate on scholarly activities that are integrated into existing curriculum.

### **PROFESSIONALISM**

An example of a program that exhibits our professionalism is the BB&T Student Traineeship program in partnership with SCORE Lancaster Lebanon. About 125 students have participated in this program in the past two years, receiving hands-on professional experiences with local businesses and an opportunity to be mentored by a retired executive.



## **PUBLIC MISSION**

Our mission requires us to respond to the emerging needs of our region. An exemplar of our public mission is the work being done by Dr. Mary Glazier and the Center for Public Scholarship and Social Change. With the support of a grant from the Spanish American Civic Association, they have developed programs in community-based research that will improve the quality of life in the City of Lancaster.

## **INCLUSION**

Inclusion motivates us to create a campus environment where differences can be expressed and respectfully heard, and where every individual experiences a sense of belonging.

An example is Dr. Kim Mahaffy, who was recognized by *Insight into Diversity* magazine for the Latino Leadership Institute, an orientation and leadership program that is helping to close the achievement gap for our Latino students.

And I want to take this opportunity to encourage you to add your voice to our “Negating Hate” Digital Quilt. You can find a link to this on the home page of our website. The site is open to everyone to make a statement. (pause)

## **INTEGRITY**

Our commitment to integrity is measured by action and responsibility and engenders a culture of trust. I'm delighted to highlight the staff and volunteers of the Veteran's Resource Center. We serve veterans as a military-friendly institution and our resource center in Mercer House in an important part of our commitment to our student veterans.

## **COMPASSION**

Compassion moves our campus toward focusing on each learner and their unique potential to impact the public good. Let me read an email that I received last week from a parent that reflects compassion:

*Dear Dr. Wubah,*

*I am sending this note to express sincere gratitude for several members of your staff. My son is an incoming freshman and has a severe life-threatening nut allergy. From the start of the process with learning services, to the moment we drove off campus today, we have been impressed by your staff's involvement with our son.*

*I will make sure I share our story with anyone I meet about what the university represents and how they approach the care for students.*

*The praise should go to Dr. Bessick, Chef Logan, Lori Souder, and Julianne Brown. All played a role and we thank them.*

*Sincerely, A Grateful Parent*

Dr. Bessick, Chef Logan, Lori Souder, and Julianne Brown, please stand to be recognized.

So, you may be wondering whether I will continue to talk about the EPPIIC values this year.” I will give you one guess!

I believe that a campus that is deeply rooted in its core values will ultimately achieve the highest level of success and will be among the best places to work. That is what we want to be!

**Our foundation is strong, our values are EPPIIC!**

**So, let me talk about plans for this academic year.**

One of the keys to making this a great year is our community focus on building a vision that is inclusive, strategic, and dynamic. Currently, we have three initiatives underway that are integral to our future: These are our:

- Reaffirmation of accreditation
- New Strategic Plan
- New Facilities Master Plan

Given this convergence in which we find ourselves, the best approach is to employ an “Integrated Planning” concept. I have instructed my team to integrate and build synergy across our planning efforts. This will enhance our ability to maximize efficiencies, build strong buy-in from our campus, improve decision-making, and drive innovation.

Now, let me share some details about each with you.

First, we are in the midst of a “Self-Study” for our Middle States Commission on Higher Education re-accreditation. For the past year and a half, our teams have been working on this project. I would like to thank the large group of dedicated faculty and staff who have spent countless hours crafting the Self-Study report. We look forward to celebrating a successful outcome in the spring semester.

Second, our current strategic plan sunsets in June of next year. Charting a course for the next five years and beyond is no small task. We’ve built an inclusive and engaging approach for this endeavor – the All University Council. The new council is comprised of almost 80 energized members. They will make recommendations on our mission and vision statements, strategic directions, goals, and objectives. I can’t wait to see their first draft.

Ultimately our new Strategic Plan will be created with input from all members of our campus community. Implementation of the new plan will start on July 1, 2020! If you are a member of the All University Council kindly stand to be recognized.

Third, our Facilities Management Department is working on our next Facilities Master Plan. This plan will guide our infrastructure investments over the next ten years by aligning major renovations and new construction with our Strategic Plan. In the meantime, let's continue to enjoy at our beautiful campus, and kindly make your voice heard in the master plan process during open forums in November.

I believe this integrated approach will be worthwhile, and it will make a difference for future generations of Marauders.

In the midst of our major planning efforts, we will carry out several initiatives as we continue to build on the momentum of the past year.

### **So, how are we going to do this?**

First, we will focus our collective energy to improve the persistence and graduation of our students. Our Student Success and Retention Team will implement intentional strategies to support student success.

Our overarching goal is to enhance and instill in our students a greater sense of academic and social belonging. These two elements are cited in the literature as important predictors of student success. During this academic year, we will use these four approaches to enhance student success:

- Implement more robust first-year scheduling.
- Launch our new college-based advisement support model
- Broaden and promote the benefits of mentoring through the newly launched Mentorship Office
- Roll out the “Complete College America’s 30 to Graduate Initiative”

Working together, across divisions, we can, and we will improve our current retention and four-year graduation rates.

Student affordability remains a top concern for our Trustees, our legislators, and me. In my inauguration speech, I mentioned affordability as one of the three pillars of my presidency. Along with the tuition freeze from the Board of Governors, we've taken actions that will result in a lower cost of attendance this year. Let me share a couple with you.

- Our new partnership with OpenStax provides an opportunity to support faculty who adopt and use digital materials in order to decrease costs for our students.
- Also, our campus team will work closely with outside experts to identify and deploy new financial aid strategies that positively impact our students.

In addition, we will work hard to obtain resources from external agencies and philanthropy. We will: [slide of bulleted points below]

- Complete the “Imagine the Possible” campaign.
- Establish a new Office of Grants and Contracts to enhance services to our faculty and students. I believe that assisting faculty to identify and submit proposals to funding agencies will pay dividends for us. These funds will augment institutional resources to support programs such as “Made in Millersville”, which engaged over 580 students who showcased their scholarship or creative works last spring.

We will Strengthen existing partnerships and build new collaborations with our friends in business and industry. This will enable us to:

- Build upon work that we have started with Clair Brothers and other companies at Rock Lititz, Eurofins, LGH, Landis Communities, and the Lancaster STEM Alliance, just to name a few.
- Develop programs that enhance enrollments and service to our region.

We can, and we will, invest our time and energy in pushing the boundaries of our impact across the region. We will do this not just because we are the largest institution of higher education in the region, but because partnerships benefit our students and advance our core value of Public Mission.

It is going to be a **GREAT YEAR!**

Last year, I spoke about how, working together, we can craft a shared vision for our institution. This year, it is safe to say that we have begun turning that vision into reality.

Can we face the challenges confronting our institution, the state system, and higher education across the nation? My answer is “YES,” because I’m betting on the collective effort and the wisdom of our community.

I’m betting on us! But how will we do this?

- First, by holding the line on costs for our students and their families.
- Second, by supporting our students so that they graduate in a timely fashion with minimum debt.
- Third, by developing a strategic plan and the financial resources needed to build a brighter future for our University
- And, fourth, by making progress in our journey to become a campus known for inclusive excellence.

Students, seeing you on campus every day invigorates me. You are the people for whom we are all working. It is because of what we see in you that we invest our time and energy to provide you with a world-class education and opportunities to assist you in achieving your personal and professional goals.

Engrained in our EPPIIC values are two characteristics that define the model community we are trying to build. So, let me leave you with a couple of African proverbs that embody these attributes. These are:

- One - Sticks in a Bundle are Unbreakable.
- Two - If you want to go quickly, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.

To those assembled here and those joining us online, let me end my remarks with these thoughts:

- **We can, and we will, stay united to form an unbreakable bundle.**
- **We can, and we will, go far this year because we have a spirit of cooperation and a new spirit of inclusion at the 'Ville that binds us together.**

**When we stick together and stay focused, we will make Millersville University the best University in the nation...THE 'VILLE!**

**Now, let's go have fun together at the Garden Supper.**