

State of the Ville' 2023

Delivered by Dr. Daniel A. Wubah, President

Members of the PASSHE Board of Governors, Trustees, faculty, staff, students, alumni, parents, community leaders, friends, and those joining us online, good afternoon and welcome to the 2023 State of the 'Ville address.

I want to thank everyone for attending this annual event which marks the beginning of our academic year.

I extend a sincere welcome to all our new employees. A special welcome also goes to our new campus leaders namely, Dr. Nafez Alyan, vice president for finance and administration, Dr. Doug Zander, associate vice president for enrollment management, Dr. Ron Wiafe, associate vice president for student affairs, and Dr. Daniel Kulmala, Assistant Vice President for International Programs and Global Engagement. Kindly join me in welcoming them.

I'd like to take a moment to remember four colleagues who passed away last year. They were:

- Dr. David Johnson, associate professor in the School of Social Work.
- Dr. Wilfredo Valentín-Márquez, assistant professor of Spanish in the English & World Languages Department.
- Dr. Behrooz Etesamipour, assistant professor in the Marketing and Management Department.
- Ms. Lori Souder, staff member in our Housing and Conferences Department.

We will miss all of them.

There will be a Celebration of Life ceremony to honor our colleagues in this building at noon on Thursday, September 21st.

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In addition, earlier in the year, we lost Dr. Ralph “Doc” Antonnen, a popular voice on WIXQ radio for several decades, who was the announcer at home games for our men’s basketball and women’s volleyball teams.

Kindly join me for a moment of silence in honor of these colleagues.

Thank you.

During my summer travels, I had an opportunity to reflect on the progress of our campus over the past five years. When Judith and I arrived on this campus, we knew we had made the right choice because of the people and a set of core values that resonated with our personal values. And although the past five years have not unfolded exactly as we imagined, we would not trade it for anything else.

Together, we’ve weathered unexpected challenges such as a global pandemic, a major network attack, and transitions in key leadership positions. And with determination and purpose, our trustees and my leadership team have steered our university to calmer waters and built a new foundation for accelerating our progress. I am gratified about what we have accomplished to date, and I hope you are too.

While it is easy to talk about our campus, as an “institution,” I am most grateful for our biggest asset, which is our people, - namely our faculty, staff, students, and countless others - who are the heart of the university. I am thankful to the campus community for five years of collaboration, engagement, and support.

I am looking forward to what we will accomplish in the next five years. I am confident that our collective energy and dedication to our mission and values will

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propel us to higher heights because we have our EPPIIC values, which serve as a compass to guide us, and our Strategic Plan, which serves as a clock to track our progress.

Speaking of our clock, every effective strategic plan should be a stable roadmap that includes dynamic elements to adapt to changing conditions. Our plan has served us well in the past three years. But last year, we had to make a few adjustments to respond to unforeseen realities. In this vein, our Council of Trustees endorsed a key realignment of our enrollment targets to reflect post-COVID realities. This is an indication that our strategic plan is working.

For the rest of this presentation, I will give a progress report on our strategic plan and conclude with a celebration of our colleagues who are exemplars of our EPPIIC values.

Let me begin with our **first pillar of Ensuring Access, Affordability and Completion.**

Our total headcount for this fall is approximately six thousand eight hundred (6800), which includes about one thousand (1000) graduate students.

Of the undergraduate students, a total of 1,542 are first year students with 1,217 in the freshman class and 325 being transfer students. About 90% are from Pennsylvania.

Also among our new students are 62 international students from 33 countries. This is the largest number of new international students on record.

We made progress on several enrollment metrics. For example, we started the semester with 994 graduate students, up from 930 last year. We also saw growth

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in our online degree completion programs year over year, increasing from 560 to 630 students.

We continue to monitor retention and persistence rates and will share that data as they become available in the next few weeks. As I mentioned last year, we will continue to focus on these student success measures for the foreseeable future.

In collaboration with the PASSHE Board of Governors, we froze tuition for an unprecedented fifth consecutive year to continue moving the needle on affordability and access. And in addition, we lowered the total cost of attendance by providing new scholarship support.

Working closely with our feeder institutions is necessary to ensure access for future students. So, let me share three quick examples of how we are do this:

- We received a one point three million dollar (\$1.3 million) TRIO Talent Search Grant to support a program for middle and high school students from disadvantaged backgrounds. We are currently working with high schools in the Lancaster, York, Harrisburg, and Reading areas in
- Last December, along with Shippensburg University and Harrisburg Area Community College, we affirmed a partnership through an enhanced transfer articulation agreement with emphasis on signature academic programs and student success.
- We have designed a direct enrollment program in partnership with local high schools. Beginning this fall, Penn Manor students in this program will take one Millersville business course each semester during their junior and senior years. A similar pilot program has been launched at McCaskey and Ephrata high schools for direct enrollment of future teachers.

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Now, let's talk about the **second pillar, which involves** giving our **students transformative experiences.**

Let me start with our University College initiatives.

- In the second year of the Starfish Student Success Platform, we launched the predictive analytics function. About 65% of our faculty used this platform to send about 40,000 tracking items to students.
- An Academic Care Team was formed and piloted in the spring semester to prioritize outreach and determine tiered support for students in academic risk categories. The office also created success plans and coordinated conversations with academic departments.
- Also, the University College hosted Finish Strong events at the end of each semester to help students prepare for their final exams. In all about 800 students took part in these events.

As we all know, high impact practices are proven tools for enhancing retention.

Let me share examples of how we engaged students in high-impact practices.

Because of the increase in participants, last year we moved the Made-in-Millersville conference from the McNairy Library to the Student Memorial Center. The event featured 185 presentations by 301 students, from 30 academic disciplines. Out of this conference, fifty-four (54) peer-reviewed articles were published in the associated journal.

In addition to our local conference, we sent nine (9) students to the National Conference on Undergraduate Research at Wisconsin. Special thanks to the faculty mentors who also made it possible for our students to present at their discipline-specific regional and national conferences.

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Lastly, about twenty undergraduate students participated in the NSF Summer Research Experiences for Undergraduates sites program and other internships.

Now let me talk about other efforts to support our students.

Last fall semester, Vice President Williams hosted a series of listening sessions with parents of our students. The outcome was the creation of a Parents Council and a Parent and Family Orientation session during our New Student Orientation Program.

Another student engagement activity last year was our focus on food insecurity. Last August, Former First Lady Francis Wolfe was on our campus to launch the Pennsylvania Hunger Free Campus Initiative. Since then, we have been designated as a Hunger Free Campus, which allowed us to receive a \$40,000 grant to support new efforts at the HUB. Congratulations to the members of the Hunger Free Campus Taskforce for receiving this grant.

Now let's talk about Athletics.

On the courts and fields of Millersville, our student athletes had a spectacular year.

In Track and Field, we had six individual PSAC Champions and our own Hannah Woelfling was crowned NCAA Division II Champion in discus. Our Wrestling program had two NCAA Championship qualifiers and nine of our athletes received All-American Awards. Also, we had four PSAC Athletes of the Year.

Our student athletes excelled in the classroom as well. For example, two hundred of them were named as PSAC Scholar-Athletes, with fifty (50) of them earning a perfect 4.0 GPA.

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So, what about our teams? Our men's baseball team, under the leadership of Coach Jon Sheehan, won the PSAC East title and the NCAA Atlantic Regional championship.

Our women's Field Hockey was the PSAC conference Runner-Up, and our men's Golf team earned a top-10 finish at the NCAA Super Regionals.

Now let to move to our DEI efforts.

We accelerated our progress toward Inclusive Excellence last year. Progress can only be realized if we create a campus community where differences are welcomed and respectfully heard, by regularly engaging in reflection and listening. As you recall, we participated in the PASSHE Campus Climate Survey. Under the leadership of the Office of Diversity and Inclusion and the three Presidential Commissions, we assessed the data from the Climate Survey and shared our findings with our campus.

Still on the topic of inclusion, we unveiled our Land Acknowledgement Statement last fall. Our goal is to recognize the history of the land upon which Millersville University sits, as we foster healing and mindfulness of our community's actions and values.

Our campus traditions and celebrations also help to create strong bonds and nurture a sense of belonging. Once again, the Campus Life Office and the Dr. Rita Smith Wade-El Intercultural Center celebrated our graduating students at the Rainbow Graduation and Graduating Students of Color ceremonies.

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Speaking of celebrating success, our university once again showed our strong commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion by receiving the HEED Award for the 11th consecutive time last year. This annual award is given to only 100 universities in North America. All this is to say creating a sense of belonging as a key driver for our current initiatives. Let's hear what our community means to our students in their own voices.

Video #1 Played Here.

Turning to the **third pillar of our strategic plan, we have committed ourselves to Invest in our People and Place.** One of the key drivers of success in this area is meeting our fundraising goals.

On June 30, we closed our "Imagine the Possible" campaign with outstanding results. Without a doubt, thousands of current and future Millersville University students will benefit from the generosity of all our donors.

So, what was the final tally? The campaign ended with a record-breaking one hundred and ten million dollars (\$110 million) which is 22% above our goal of ninety million dollars (\$90 million). Not only is this the largest fundraising outcome in our university's history, but it is also the most successful fundraising effort in the history of PASSHE.

So let's look at the final results for each of our four priority areas –

- \$31 million for student scholarships, including 230 new endowed scholarships and annual awards.
- \$59.7 million for student learning experiences
- \$7.7 million for Marauder Athletics

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- \$11.6 million for Campus Revitalization.

I want to take a moment to thank our generous donors to the campaign, all 12,086 of you. Each gift, no matter the size, moved us forward in meeting and exceeding our goal. Each gift allowed our university to raise the bar to new heights in the state system.

Our faculty and staff also did well in receiving grants from external agencies. They received thirty-four (34) new externally funded grants with a total award value of 11.7 million dollars.

- Among the grants were those received from the PA Department of Education by Drs. Tiffany Wright, Aileen Hower, and Deborah Tamakloe.
- Dr. Jack Oguto was the recipient of a US Department of Labor grant.
- And four members competed successfully for PASSHE Faculty Professional Development Grants. Congratulations to Drs. Lara Weise Cross, Isaac Ligocki, Katrzyna Jakubiak, and Stacey Irwin.

Still focusing on our employees, last year, I announced that we would develop a new monthly employee recognition program to celebrate those who demonstrate the highest levels of our EPPIIC Values. This led to the new Skully's Circle Award, which was launched in the spring.

Our first three award winners are:

- Dr. Richard Glenn, Professor and Chair of Government, Policy & Law
- Ms. Jackie Aliotta, Assistant Director of Student Organizations & Leadership
- Ms. Tara Borgna, Director of Enterprise Applications in Information Technology

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Congratulations to our three exemplary colleagues!

I encourage you to nominate a colleague who is doing extraordinary EPPIIC work for the Skully's Circle this year.

Staying on investing in our people, just after our May commencement, we held our annual All Employee barbeque, where we were visited by a friendly set of Alpacas who thought nothing at all about posing with our guests. We added a new wrinkle by introducing the "corn hole" tournament, which brought a more competitive spirit to the event. I was told our Chief of Police attempted to sneak into the final round. He has to wait till next May to try that again.

This January, we will unveil a new all-employee gathering to welcome the campus community back from the winter break and enjoy the company of friends and colleagues. Stay tuned for more information on that new event.

Turning to our physical infrastructure, our grounds remain the envy of the state system and completion of the pond revitalization has added to the natural beauty of our campus.

I recently toured the new spaces in Boyer Hall and came away extremely impressed with the aesthetics and functionality of the renovations. Our campus Police Department now has a state-of-the-art space to serve our community and new space for Information Technology is also nearing completion in the same building. Lehigh Hall, the new home of Athletics, has been reimagined.

With the design work completed, the Lombardo Hall project is about move to the next phase. Interior renovation work has already commenced and work on the exterior will start in the coming months.

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With regards to technology, it continues to advance with a heightened level of security. Last year,

- We partnered with Arctic Wolf on a security monitoring platform to mitigate potential security threats.
- We launched the Microsoft Training Sessions for employees to improve their skills and enhance their digital literacy.
- And we implemented several innovative technology platforms.

Ultimately continuous improvement is our goal as we work to position ourselves for a vibrant future.

Strategic direction four focuses on telling the 'Ville story.

To help us share how current students and recent alumni have benefited from our faculty along with hands-on learning experiences, University Communications and Marketing is partnering with Academic Affairs to produce departmental videos for each undergraduate area. Featured on the website along with social media, here's a sample of the work done so far.

VIDEO #2 played at this time.

Telling our story to external audiences requires proof points that demonstrate our deep commitment to serve our region.

One such proof point highlighting our public mission is the growing array of industry partnerships.

- In the College of Science and Technology, we partnered with Lampire Biological Laboratories to develop a new BSL2 laboratory research space.

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- A new venture with Climavision to install an X-band weather surveillance radar on the Millersville water tower will fill a critical gap in regional weather data and provide cutting-edge scientific data for our faculty.
- We partnered with the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay to replant and restore a native tree barrier to protect the Roddy Pond research site ecosystem with 177 trees planted.
- The Tell School of Music developed a collaboration with the Blackbird Academy where Millersville students can complete their last semester at Blackbird's state-of-the-art live audio engineering program in Nashville. Our students will earn a Bachelor of Science from Millersville and a diploma from the Blackbird Academy.

Our strong focus on the Sustainable Development Goals was evident this past year. We participated in the Earth Day Climate Summit in April. The following month, we hosted the 3rd annual SDG Conference, which focused on ZERO HUNGER. In all, about 100 people gathered at the Ware Center to discuss food insecurity and potential solutions in Central Pennsylvania.

And who better to tell our story than our students. Serving as our ambassadors and student storytellers, our new Millersville Cygnus Society recognizes a select group of talented seniors who have both the passion and purpose to lead and serve the MU community. The inaugural class was inducted in April and will serve as the ambassadors throughout this academic year.

Cygnus Society members, please stand and be recognized.

Everyone here today can be a Millersville storyteller. Often, our best stories come from unlikely sources. For example, who could have envisioned Dr. Kelly Banna

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and her friends from the Rat Lab gracing the front page of the LNP this past summer. I am told that Kelly's little friends are doing well in their new homes!

Our student and faculty storytellers remind all of us to keep telling our unique 'Ville stories in amazing ways! Each of us contributes to making Millersville a vibrant community.

Speaking of which, I'm excited to transition to the moment you have been waiting for – the presentation of our EPPIIC Awards winners for 2023.

As I mentioned last year, the strongest driving force behind our Millersville culture is our EPPIIC values. These values influence how we interact with each other and with the external world. These values also shape how we meet our mission and realize our vision.

Today, we will celebrate our values and express our appreciation to the nominees who act as role models to emulate. Everyone who was nominated deserves recognition for being an exemplar of one or more of our core values.

This spring, more than 50 employees were nominated, and their names are listed on the Awards website.

Let's give all our nominees a round of applause.

Now, the excitement builds

Moving to our **first award – Exploration.**

This year's winner of the Exploration award is Barry Atticks from the Music Department for his exceptional efforts to provide our students with innovative opportunities to learn from world-class musicians and industry leaders.

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Congratulations and kindly join me on stage!

Our second award is for Professionalism.

This year's winners of the Professionalism award are Kayla Rankin and Greg Black from Facilities for their unwavering commitment to service excellence.

Congratulations and kindly join me on stage!

Our next award is for Public Mission

This year's winner of the Public Mission award is Dr. Jennifer Frank. Dr. Frank has been a key driver in working across the region and on campus in the fight against food insecurity and for a higher quality of life for all people.

Congratulations and kindly join me on stage!

Integrity is our next core value to be recognized.

This year's winner of the Integrity award is Jennifer Hart from the President's Office. I have been privileged to work closely with Jenn and see firsthand the high level of dedication and passion she brings to supporting the President's Office and the Council of Trustees. She is also a key member of the team which makes this event possible each year.

Congratulations and kindly join me on stage!

Our next award is for Inclusion

This year's winner of the Inclusion award is Dr. Thomas Neville, one of the most passionate and effective advocates for the dignity of all people, particularly those students in our nationally acclaimed inclusion program.

Congratulations and kindly join me on stage!

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And finally, we have the **award for Compassion**.

This year's winner of the Compassion award is Dr. Kazi Houssain. Dr. Houssain is dedicated to his education students and serves as a distinguished role model for our future educators.

Congratulations and kindly join me on stage!

Let's give another round of applause to all our award winners.

I want to express my sincerest appreciation to the EPPIC Value Awards Committee, particularly Wendy Bowersox from Human Resources who coordinated the process this year.

Now let me talk briefly about the major priorities for this year.

We have identified four key areas that need immediate collective attention to ensure that we meet our mission, strengthen our foundation, and continue to build our legacy.

Last year, **ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT** was one of our top priorities and we made progress in this area by stabilizing our numbers. However, we must keep a laser focus on enrollments. How are we going to do this?

- Continue to take steps that would improve our recruitment, retention, and persistence.
- Build on the new agreement with Academic Partnership to grow our online graduate programs and reach a broader market.
- Grow our international enrollments by building on existing and new partnerships in West Africa and India.

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Secondly, we will continue our efforts to provide the best spaces for learning and co-curricular activities by **IMPROVING OUR FACILITIES**. Among the top projects for this year are:

- Renovate Lombardo Hall for our Lombardo College of Business
- Enhance athletic facilities including Pucillo and the Stadium locker rooms.
- Demolish the four de-commissioned houses on E. Frederick Street and complete a space inventory analysis.

Thirdly, because of the challenges in the higher education landscape, it is necessary to **ENHANCE OUR OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCIES**. How will we do this?

Let me give you a few examples. We will:

- Optimize resource allocation to support academic programs and administrative functions.
- Implement practices in our operations to reduce overhead costs.
- Examine our personnel needs to ensure that we have the optimal human resources to accomplish our mission of providing quality education at an affordable price.
- Initiate a survey to determine the current quality of service and establish an improvement process whenever necessary.

Finally, we will take steps to ensure we have **A STABLE RESOURCE BASE** to support our mission. Among the steps that we will take are:

- Meet the goals of our Comprehensive Plan Program while monitoring our financial stability ratios as directed by the Chancellor's Office.

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- Monitor our budget performance, identify variances, and implement corrective actions.
- Manage a revised balanced budget for this year to align with our strategic initiatives.

In closing, I am confident that:

Together, we have the power to move the needle on enrollments and ensure that each student who enters our university receives the best possible education and walks across the commencement stage prepared to change the world.

Together, we will open our doors wide to new audiences of adult learners in our on-line degree completion programs and new learners seeking micro-credentials and other career building opportunities.

Together, we will warmly welcome new arrivals from across the globe seeking a Millersville education and a compassionate and caring community.

And together, we will use our collective talent to plan for and execute strategic and operational plans to promote long term institutional sustainability.

Best wishes for a great academic year. The semester is already off to an exciting start, and I can feel the energy and excitement. I hope to see you at the Garden Supper this evening and on campus at one of our many events this semester.

In closing, our newest community members who have traveled long distances to join the 'Ville have a special message for us, let's hear from them.

VIDEO #3 played at this time.

Thank you, thank you, thank you!

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My friends, YOU are the 'Ville!

And together, WE will make this a momentous year!

Have a great evening.