Return to Campus

A Discussion with the Board of Trustees
July 15, 2021
Signs of Resilience

• FY 21 was a record setting year for Sponsored Research Awards, up 9% over the previous year and 23% over the last five years.

• Penn State Outreach units reached participants from all 67 Pennsylvania Counties, all 50 states, and more than 36 countries. WPSU reached 46 of 50 Top Media Markets in the U.S. with WPSU-produced documentary content.

• A landmark $27.125 million gift from Ross and Carol Nese to enhance nursing education at Penn State is the largest ever for the College of Nursing, the second-largest single commitment to an academic unit in Penn State’s history, and the third largest gift in Penn State history.

• Despite COVID and our inability to meet donors in person, Penn State had its sixth highest year in total new gifts.
Signs of Resilience

• More than 6,000 employees and students participated in panels focused on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at an enterprise scale.
• An all-time record was reached for first year applications at nearly 111,000.
• Penn State ranked fourth in the U.S. and 32nd in the world out of 1,115 international institutions that participated in the Times Higher Education University Impact Rankings.
• The Association of Public and Land-grant Universities named Penn State as one of six university finalists for its ninth annual Innovation & Economic Prosperity University Awards, recognizing the Invent Penn State initiative and its LaunchBox & Innovation Hub Network.
• Units continued their strategic planning process, with 99% completing their plans for the future.
Plans for Fall and Beyond

• After a phased return over the summer semesters, a full on-campus learning environment returns for fall.

• Health and well-being of students, faculty, staff, and local communities remains a priority.

• Contingency planning; What we might have to do if COVID-19 conditions deteriorate:
  o Expand testing expectations for non-vaccinated Penn Staters
  o Consider other mitigation actions such as more masking/distancing
  o Implement any revised PA DOH or CDC guidance

• Continue to assess the data and emphasize the importance of having our employees and students share with us their vaccine status.
COVID-19 Fall Strategy

- Strongly encourage vaccination; provide incentive opportunities.
- University vaccination assessment efforts ongoing.
- UHS at University Park is a vaccine point of distribution (students).
- Each campus has community vaccine resources identified.
- Masks inside campus buildings for non-vaccinated people.
  - Teamsters negotiated agreement.
- Others may choose to continue to wear masks.
- Physical distancing requirement lifted June 28, 2021.
- Continue to align with PA DOH and CDC guidance.
**COVID-19 Operations**

- Testing to be available based on need.
  - Symptomatic and asymptomatic capacity.
- TASC laboratory capacity ongoing at University Park.
- Centralized Contact Tracing ongoing.
- Quarantine and Isolation capacity established at each campus.
  - Including 200 reserved rooms at University Park;
    - Commonwealth Campuses to have rooms/hotel space.
- Wastewater analysis at University Park ongoing.
- Dashboard continues through fall.
- Call Center fully operational.
- COCC remains functional.
Return to Campus: Faculty and Staff
Goals for Return to On-Site Work

• Balance functional needs of University with personal and health-related employee concerns regarding return to on-site work.
• Recognize that many staff have successfully worked remotely during the pandemic.
• A Remote Work Task Force is reviewing the costs/benefits of increased reliance on remote work and will develop a long-term remote work strategy/process to be announced later in 2021.
• Staff will be returning to work by August 16, 2021; remote/hybrid working arrangements may be reviewed and considered.

https://sites.psu.edu/returntoworkwork/
Goals for Return to On-Site Work

• Continue to build an on-campus community that focuses on students, visitors, customers, and fellow employees.
• Recognize the importance of face-to-face interactions with students.
• Maximize delivery of in-person instruction; we have returned to non-COVID modes with 95% of courses at University Park and 88% at Commonwealth Campuses scheduled in-person.
Did the Pandemic Impact the No. of Retirements?

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% Increase From Prior Year: 12% 35%
Applications for Summer/Fall 2021-22

- First-year applications up 15% to 110,993, an all-time University record.
- International applications down 2.7% (China down 18%; other international apps up 20%).
- Test-optional program implemented and 71.5% of Penn State first-year applicants used it (well beyond expectations); Current program extends through fall 2023 applications with planned assessment of impact in summer/fall 2022.
Enrollment—Incoming Students

• First-year commitments (accepts/paid) now at 18,037, up 2% from this time last year.
  - University Park down 0.7%; Commonwealth Campuses up 5.6%; World Campus down 0.2%.

• International first-year down by 14.1%.

• Underrepresented first-year students up 18.6%; One of the largest underrepresented groups in University history.

• High school GPA for entering class 3.63 on 4.0 scale, was 3.61 last year.

• Transfer commitments down 10.2%.
  - community college enrollments hard hit by pandemic.
  - usual recession uptick in college enrollment not seen during pandemic.
  - establishing even closer community college relations priority of Commonwealth Campus administration.
Welcome Week

• Arrival dates vary by campus.
• At University Park, new students living on-campus for the first time can sign up to arrive Aug. 16-19; Returning students will arrive Aug. 20-22.
• First-year students at University Park will be automatically assigned extended orientation programming based on their arrival.
• President's New Student Convocation will be held Saturday, August 21 at the BJC.
Course Delivery Schedule

- Classes were scheduled using the University’s non-COVID modes of instruction.
- A full range of web classes continues to be offered.
- Students who are unable to attend in-person are being advised to take World Campus courses.
Status of International Students
Current Challenges

Mobility and Obtaining a Visa:

• Many U.S. embassies around the world are now open for visa interviews, but they’re working through the backlog from 2020 while trying to address current requests.

• We’re optimistic most of our international students will be able to attend this fall, but some will simply not be able to establish an appointment for a visa interview in time.

• Global Programs is discussing the academic options for affected students.
Current Challenges (continued)

National travel restrictions:
• All international students traveling to the U.S. must have a negative COVID test prior to flying.
• Most will then have to quarantine on arrival, and in some cases the U.S. government requires the quarantine in the third nation en route.
• Global Programs is advising students about their travel plans.

Vaccinations:
• Most countries are offering vaccinations to their populations at a far smaller scale than in the U.S.
• Global Programs is advising students to follow national guidelines for receiving a vaccine. Also working with housing to advise incoming students who want to be vaccinated on arrival.
Support for International Students

- Global Programs held a series of online town halls for students and their families, through spring and early summer.
  - In May, for example, there were four town hall meetings in multiple languages and each one had in excess of 250 participants.
International Student Recruitment and Experience Task Force

- Researching opportunities to bolster international recruitment and partnerships.
- Recognize that post-COVID international student flow will likely be different than pre-COVID.
- Review current international student experience and recommend improvements.
- Report due at end of August 2021.
Return to Campus: Incorporating Lessons Learned
Select Examples

• Fall Enrollment Initiatives
  o Value of mixture of in-person and virtual programming; virtual summer Open Houses for University Park on July 27&29 (currently 2,800 registered).

• Academic Advising
  o Virtual: more appointments, fewer no-shows; more regular meetings. Both options in the fall.

• Career Services
  o Equal Access: Over 20% of students outside University Park attended virtually (5% last year); greater diversity of employers (smaller businesses). Hybrid format for fall based on survey preferences from attendees.

• Tutoring
  o 30% increase in undergraduates using Penn State Learning and Academic support resources than before COVID, with steeper increases among Black (+35%) and Hispanic/Latino (+30%) students. More offerings for fall.
Select Examples

• Conferences and Institutes
  o More than 9,000 participants in 26 virtual conferences in ’20-’21; Virtual extended our reach (make choices in the future).

• Development
  o Virtual programming and “visits”; Back to travel and personal appointments. Greater potential for future virtual programming to extend our reach without travel.

• Commencement
  o Virtual livestreams and stadium events were highly successful but intentionally added more “energy.” Innovations/learnings from those ceremonies will add engaging new elements to future in-person ceremonies.
Summary

• Looking forward to a full on-campus learning experience beginning this fall. Return to normal becoming tangible.
• Continue to stay vigilant and develop COVID contingency plans.
• We are applying what we learned during the pandemic to improve Penn State.
• Penn State can pivot quickly and effectively to fulfill our land-grant mission.