

President Message – September 16, 2020

Dear Campus Community,

As you know, in July, the Board of Governors of Pennsylvania's State System of Higher Education passed a resolution authorizing the Chancellor to review the financial impact of integrating operations at select universities.

University integration seeks to utilize multi-university scale to provide superior academic options for students and achieve cost efficiencies to ensure State System institutions continue serving their regions for years to come. Integrations would also allow for expansion into adjacent markets to better meet regional education and workforce needs by combining the capacities and scholarly expertise at institutions. Finally, integration would allow for anchor institutions that support economic development and regional stability to preserve their important institutional identities.

At that time, the Board of Governors directed the Chancellor to examine three potential university integrations focused on meeting current and emerging regional and statewide needs in the Commonwealth:

1. California University and Clarion University
2. Edinboro University and Slippery Rock University
3. Lock Haven University and Mansfield University

Those initial pairings have now shifted resulting in an examination of different integration models. This is in accordance with the July resolution which indicated that the process be open to an analysis leading to other potential integration models and approaches and/or allow for different university alignments, as informed by the ongoing financial stability review.

You may have seen earlier in the week that California University, Clarion University, and Edinboro University have now formed an integration group. Today it will be publicly announced that Bloomsburg University, is now joining Lock Haven University and Mansfield University to form the second potential integration group.

Lock Haven University has been in discussion with Mansfield since 2019 regarding alignments in the key areas of workforce development, creating stackable credentials, and adult education. We now look to a third partner to strengthen the opportunities we can provide for our students and our partners in the region. Leveraging the scale and stability of our combined institutions would position us to shape the universities for the decades to come, meet demand where it exists, increase access to new markets, and foster enrollment growth.

This process is just beginning, and we will help define the end result. Know that it will continue to be a process that is consultative, transparent, and inclusive of the many voices and perspectives that make our University great. The financial review and assessment process for integration will now continue leading up to October's Board of Governor's meeting. From there an implementation plan will be developed taking the process into next spring. A final plan will be presented to the Board of Governors next July for implementation in the fall of 2022.

Every step of the way we will continue to work on what is best for the students we serve throughout the region. To our students, employees, partners, and friends, I'd like to reiterate what I shared when we began the integration discussion. As the process continues to evolve, none of these things have changed.

For LHU's current and prospective students this process can mean an enriched academic experience and more opportunities. In the future, you would have access to a wider range of affordable quality programs and experiences than exist now through leveraging the strengths of three institutions.

For our faculty and staff, this is an opportunity to continue our mission of serving students and to inform and shape the future of public higher education in our region and the nation. The collective talent of our faculty and staff will be integral to this process as we work together to reconceive, rebuild, refresh and expand the opportunities we offer to all our students.

Our local communities, employers, and organizations will continue to find a great partner in Lock Haven University as we become even more responsive to the ever-changing needs of Pennsylvania's workforce and leverage new partnership opportunities through greater scale and reach.

Finally, for our alumni, friends, supporters, and residents of the surrounding communities, know that the integration approach is an opportunity for Lock Haven University to provide an even more vibrant educational experience while honoring our historic identity and 150 years of rich traditions and importance to civic life and economic growth.

There are and will be many questions that will be answered along the way, but we are ready to take this journey.

I want to acknowledge that I recognize that this is a lot for us to absorb as we, at the same time, deal with longstanding financial challenges and continue our efforts to work safely through the pandemic. But we are a Haven Family. We are Bald Eagles. And we will remain so. Our institution has seen many changes in the past 150 years—all while fulfilling our core mission—to serve students and provide them a quality education that will equip them for a lifetime of success. I am confident that, together, we will continue that mission and soar higher into the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert Bignatello". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.