

**THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY
BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

**COMMITTEE ON ACADEMIC AFFAIRS, RESEARCH AND STUDENT LIFE
MINUTES OF MEETING
VOLUME AARSL 48**

March 21, 2024

A meeting of the Committee on Academic Affairs, Research and Student Life of the Board of Trustees was held via video conference call at 9:15 a.m. on Thursday, March 21, 2024.

The following members, constituting a quorum, were present: Chair Wagman, Dietrich, Krieger, Lynch, Mumin, Paterno, Riegel, and Schuyler. Also attending were Board Chair Schuyler (*Ex Officio*), President Bendapudi (*Ex Officio*), the Governor's non-voting representative Myers, Emeriti Trustees Doran and Pope, and Constituent Representative Stine and Wede. Also present were staff members Bieschke, DelliCarpini, Dowhower, Harlow, Harvey, Melvin, Oman, Pell, Read, Schwartz, Smith, and Thorndike.

Chair Wagman called the meeting to order at 9:15 a.m. Harvey confirmed a quorum was present. Chair Wagman welcomed all attendees and reminded those attending via Microsoft Livestream the agenda and supporting materials was available at <https://trustees.psu.edu/>.

Chair Wagman called for a motion for the Committee to approve January 18, 2024, committee *Meeting Minutes*, which was forwarded by Trustee Riegel, seconded by Trustee Lynch, and unanimously approved.

Chair Wagman welcomed Matt Melvin, Vice President for Enrollment Management, who provided the Committee with an update on financial aid and admission strategies and the impact on retention rates for Commonwealth Campus students from the first year to the second year. The overall retention rate at the Commonwealth Campuses is 77.3%. Melvin noted retention and graduation rates are largely a factor of a student's academic profile and financial profile, and that goals and targets need to be set within the context of Commonwealth Campuses' market position and profile. He acknowledged that the availability and effective use of financial aid and scholarship support plays a critical role in recruitment, retention, and graduation. Data analysis confirms that academic performance more than affordability has a greater impact on retention. Nearly 18% of the entering F22 CWC first year/full-time entering cohort completed the first year with <2.0 or with no earned Penn State GPA, of those, only 30% continued to term three compared to 86% of those earning a first-year Penn State GPA of 2.0 or higher.

Improving academic performance and progress must be the primary focus of first-year programs, advising, curriculum and support systems. In addition, revised aid packaging regimens targeting CWC entering first-year cohort will be implemented for the Fall 2024 cycle and revised/adjusted to optimize the aid spend, stay within fixed-aid budget allocation for the in-state portion of the aid spend and ensure continued alignment with enrollment goals and priorities.

Chair Wagman also greeted Dr. Margo DelliCarpini, Vice President for Commonwealth Campuses and Executive Chancellor, who highlighted various commonwealth campus programs and services aimed at increasing retention and graduation rates. She noted that successful retention and progression starts before students arrive on campus, through key engagements such as the Summer Bridge and Jump Start programs and New Student Orientation. As students progress in their academic journey, continued support and resources through advising, tutoring and peer mentoring is critical, as is proactively identifying at-risk students and intervening early.

DelliCarpini noted that student success and retention efforts at the Commonwealth Campuses are centered on high-impact practices inside and outside the classroom; holistic student support services and strategies; strategic external partnerships to provide access to internships, co-ops and service learning; and an institutional focus on student success. She highlighted several successful programs and initiatives at individual Commonwealth Campuses as examples, including academic coaches and “Lion Guidez” peer mentors at Penn State Hazleton and a first-year bridge program for underrepresented engineering students at Penn State Berks, the FirstGen Living Learning Community at Penn State Abington; the WE cARE Pantry at Penn State Harrisburg; and the Chancellor’s Commission for Student Success by Design at Penn State Brandywine.

Dr. Andrew Read, Senior Vice President for Research, provided an update on the continued growth of Penn State’s research enterprise, focusing on areas where the institution is or can be a leader in higher education. He addressed key strategic questions previously raised by the committee, including partnerships with other leading universities, leveraging ongoing success with research in specific areas, such as government and agriculture, by making investments in retaining top faculty and selective recruiting; plant growth facilities; facilities around semiconductors and the CHIPS and Science Act; and additional well-trained staff to support awards and operations. He also highlighted key approaches currently underway to build a pipeline of historically marginalized and underrepresented researchers and scholars, including relationships with minority-serving institutions; leveraging the Provost’s Postdoctoral Fellowship Program; and beginning discussions on cluster hiring faculty in broad thematic areas that are likely to attract strong scholars from underrepresented groups.

Read noted the great synergy that exists between Penn State’s 67 extension offices and the research enterprise. He highlighted several examples of researchers and extension officers collaborating to tackle community problems, including researching blight control on mushroom farms and investigating tick-borne diseases. In addition, he highlighted an extensive project led by the College of Engineering, the Office of the Senior Vice President for Research and the Office of Planning, Assessment, and Institutional Research (OPAIR) to quantify undergraduate research at Penn State.

The meeting is available in its entirety [here](#).

Chair Wagman noted the next meeting of the Committee on AARSL is scheduled for Thursday, April 18, 224 at 11:30 a.m., agenda topics for that meeting will specifically focus on the most impactful programs that are currently in place for first year students and a discussion on how to leverage these programs to have greater impact for incoming and current students. The Committee will also hear an update and status report on the Student HUB project to centralize resources.

With no other business coming before the Committee, the meeting was adjourned at 10:16 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Shannon Harvey
University Secretary
Office of the Board of Trustees

Resource Hub Project



Committee on Academic Affairs, Research and Student Life

Board of Trustees

April 18, 2024

Identifying the need



A horizontal blue line with four blue shield-shaped markers above it, indicating a sequence of four steps.

UPUA president interested in enhancing sexual assault resources at Penn State

Realization that the resources already existed but were hard to find

Student Leaders Roundtable project development

President Bendapudi adopts a multi-tiered, equity-centered, one stop resource hub as a DEIB goal



PennState

+ Engagement + Career + Mental Health + Academics + Safety + DEI + Basic Needs



MyResource

**Not quite sure what you are looking for?
Ask us anything!**

×

Some examples:

- *I didn't do well on an exam. What do I do?*
- *I haven't been making friends since moving to school. What do I do?*
- *I need help emailing a teacher to let them know about my learning disability.*

**Know what you are looking for, but
sure what resource is right for you!**

×

If you type in the name of what you are looking for, we will provide similar resources that you can compare side-by-side and choose what is right for you.

ONLINE HUB

Key topic buckets organize resources based on student needs.

Defining the goal

***To minimize silos and better coordinate duplicative efforts:
Establish a multi-tiered, equity-centered “onestop” resource hub that drives all undergraduate students to one place for answers and connection to the multiple units and resources that contribute to the student experience, better joins curricular and co-curricular resources, and that is responsive to the complexities of the student body and the varied pathways to success.***



ONLINE HUB

A website and virtual assistant to help students identify critical resources that leverages AI to provide a customized experience with a holistic understanding of the student.



STAFFED CENTER

A staffed center to respond to concerns and go beyond the capacity of online self-service with personal connection and fine-tuned responses, in-person at UP and virtually at campuses.



ENHANCE RESOURCES

Build on existing resources, particularly those within the DEIB areas, by expanding expert care and advisors for targeted communities at Penn State.

Tiers

An interactive online student self-service information hub that serves students and more effectively facilitates their navigation to tools and resources that support and enhance progress, degree completion, and the overall student experience, with the greater goal to facilitate greater equity in academic progress and outcomes and enhance belonging for students.

**INCREASE
EQUITY**

All students can access, thus leveling the playing field of information.

**IMPROVE
EFFICIENCY**

Decrease time to information, open avenues for students to ask more private questions.

**OPTIMIZE HUMAN
RESOURCES**

Free advisers for more complex student questions and conversations.

**ENHANCE STUDENT
EXPERIENCE**

Increase student satisfaction and sense of belonging at Penn State.

SAVINGS

Reduced student attrition and optimization of University staff resources.

Goals

Retention and Student Success Pipelines

Low-income students work part-time jobs, and therefore, have less time to devote to their studies and seeking support.

First-generation students don't always have a support system at home that knows how to help them navigate college courses and resources.

Racialized minorities struggle with belonging and involvement because they report higher numbers of discrimination and mistrust in the system.

Students who are more likely to drop out or struggle in or out of the classroom are the **ones forced to overcome the greatest barriers.**

AI Resource Hub Targets

Getting help will be faster

Getting help will be easier

Getting help will be less anxiety-inducing

Retention, overall success in and out of the classroom will improve

Value

Current Progress

- ***Developed project key elements***
- ***Met with vendors to learn about AI and virtual assistants***
- ***Worked with IBM to develop a minimum viable product (MVP)***
- ***Prioritized integrations of the resource hub with existing University systems***
- ***Hired a project manager and identified a change manager***
- ***Created a Tier 2 proposal***

Next Steps

- ***Finalizing a vendor agreement***
- ***Co-development of the resource hub platform***
- ***Brand and market the product***
- ***Develop assessment criteria***
- ***Develop phasing***
- ***Hire staff to support***
- ***Testing in summer with launch in fall***

Leveraging technology to drive student career success

**Nittany Lion
Careers**

LionLink

**Post-Grad
Survey**

Improving industry relationships

- ***Employer engagement positions across Commonwealth***
- ***Career Readiness Employer Advisory Board***
- ***Co-op Program at Schuylkill campus***
- ***Enterprise Constituent Relationship Management (ECRM)***

Advancing the Road to Success

Dr. Margo DelliCarpini and Dr. Jeff Adams

April 18, 2024



PennState

Advancing the Road to Success

Social, emotional and academic support are essential elements to students' successful transition during their first year of college. At Penn State, programming includes summer bridge programs, mentorship and academic engagement, STEM focused programming and events designed to build community and foster connections with other students, faculty, and staff on each campus



Building Academic and Social Connections

Summer bridge programs allow students to fully immerse themselves in the college experience prior to the start of the fall semester

Research has demonstrated that summer bridge programs can have significant impact on bolstering student success metrics

Our current programs, highlighted in the whitepaper, are the most longstanding and impactful

Recent data on new-student orientation experiences indicate that summer bridge program participants who are first generation feel more comfortable accessing resources, more prepared for college and more socially connected than other first-gen and even continuing-generation students.

Student Voice survey from Inside Higher Ed and College Pulse; Sept '23

Most Effective and Impactful Summer Programs

University
Park

Learning Edge
Academic
Program

Engineering
Summer
Bridge

FastStart

Commonwealth
Campuses

Pathway to
Success
Summer Start

Engineering
Ahead

Aspiring
Scholars

World Campus

Smart Track
to Success



PennState

Opportunities to Expand and Challenges to Overcome

The operational costs of some of these programs are an obstacle for many students, particularly those from historically underrepresented populations and first-gen students

The ability to scale these programs to smaller campuses will be dictated by resource availability; limiting factors are most commonly a lack of housing and no food service capabilities during the summer

Dual enrollment programs have proven to be an effective pathway for some K-12 students, but are somewhat limited in scale and conflicting high school/college demands are a consideration