PROVOST JONES REMARKS

“The State of Innovation: Generating Ideas to Grow PA”

Friday, October 29, 2019

Grow PA is a statewide initiative that convenes people and organizations throughout Pennsylvania to advance a modern growth agenda. During this event at Penn State Harrisburg, Grow PA partners dived deeper into challenges the Commonwealth faces to help generate ideas that drive innovation and prosperity across all counties. Presenting findings from their recently released report, “Ideas for Pennsylvania’s Innovation Policy,” experts from the Brookings Institution provided an in-depth keynote comparison and analysis of Pennsylvania’s innovation economy and its leading competition. The event also featured “flash talks” from leaders pioneering new initiatives in their communities to drive growth in Pennsylvania.

In his remarks, Penn State Executive Vice President and Provost Nick Jones discussed the importance of Penn State’s role in leading the charge to innovate across the Pennsylvania as the Commonwealth’s only land-grant University. He also emphasized the University’s economic impacts throughout the Commonwealth and commitments to working with business leaders, communities, legislators, and other partners to make short- and long-term investments that will benefit generations of Pennsylvanians.

Good afternoon, everyone. It's been a pleasure joining you today for this engaging and enlightening event. Thank you for having me.

As the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania’s only land-grant institution, Penn State prides itself on fulfilling its three-pronged mission of teaching, research, and service.

With 24 campuses in Pennsylvania including this one, Penn State is one University, geographically distributed. Our integrated model promotes stability, as
the campuses share the University’s mission, administrative units, student application process, and governing board. It allows every campus to be unique, while still benefiting from being a part of one Penn State.

Most importantly, our campuses help Penn State serve the families of Pennsylvania, providing access to a world-class education with a long and proud history, a legacy of impactful research, and a stellar academic reputation.

More than 95 percent of Pennsylvanians live within a 30-mile radius of a Penn State campus, and 75 percent of them live within 15 miles of one. With nearly 30,000 students enrolled across our Commonwealth Campuses, Penn State is fulfilling its land-grant mission to provide an accessible and affordable education to Pennsylvania citizens, many of whom live, work, and take classes in their local communities.

Penn State has a powerful economic impact throughout the Commonwealth. According to an independent study released earlier this year, the University contributes more than $11.6 billion to Pennsylvania’s economy and supports – directly and indirectly – more than 105,000 jobs each year.

Also, for every dollar ($1) in state appropriations to Penn State, the University returns to the Commonwealth 1 dollar and 24 cents ($1.24) in tax payments.

Penn State’s campuses serve as prominent cultural and economic centers in their communities. Working with business leaders, communities, legislators, and other partners, the University is committed to making short- and long-term investments that will benefit generations of Pennsylvanians.

To advance our mission of research for the public good, we embrace innovation and promote economic development by encouraging and rewarding entrepreneurship. Working collaboratively with many partners, we bring research-based knowledge to Pennsylvanians where they live and work.
Over time, this has been most evident in Penn State’s steadfast commitment to agriculture. The Commonwealth chartered Penn State in 1855 to bring modern science to bear in making agriculture more productive and efficient.

Today, Penn State Extension is the premier educational network that gives people in Pennsylvania’s 67 counties access to the University’s resources and expertise. It helps individuals, families, businesses, and communities throughout Pennsylvania with information and educational programs designed to support productive, profitable, and competitive businesses, and a strong agriculture and food system.

Penn State commitment to agriculture remains strong, but our positive impacts now extend much further – in fields ranging from education and medicine to science, engineering, and technology.

When we launched the “Invent Penn State” initiative four years ago, we hoped it would facilitate technology-driven economic development and job creation throughout Pennsylvania.

Recognizing that great minds need support to bring their ideas to market, we also envisioned that industry and other partnerships would be crucial to achieving our goals.

Since then, we’ve opened innovation hubs in 21 Penn State campus communities, and they have attracted nearly $5 million in external matched and leveraged funds. Virtually all Pennsylvania residents live within 30 minutes of an Invent Penn State hub.

Recent data tell us that 39 new Pennsylvania companies, 72 products, and 89 jobs have stemmed from entrepreneurial activity involving more than 1,500 students at our campuses. Those numbers are sure to grow.

Speaking of numbers, I want to mention Penn State graduates and their contributions to the Commonwealth’s economic vitality.
We matriculate thousands of learners annually, and many of them stay in Pennsylvania to live and work. Of about 650,000 living Penn State alumni nationwide, more than half of them – nearly 365,000 – are right here in Pennsylvania.

The numbers are even more striking for our most recent graduates – individuals 35 years of age or younger who graduated between 2008 and 2019.

Of Penn State’s 264,000 graduates since 2008, about 195,000 – nearly three-quarters of them – live and work in Pennsylvania. This new generation of workers will make significant impacts in the Commonwealth for decades to come.

Penn State is excited to be leading the way in economic development, innovation, and entrepreneurship throughout Pennsylvania.

By leveraging our ties with industry, local businesses, and broader communities, we are promoting much-needed economic development and student success, while they’re in school and after graduation.

Penn State remains ready to partner with the Commonwealth, with industry, and with communities to maximize our impact for the betterment of our communities.

Thank you all for being here today and for your ongoing commitment to impact.