

Opening Day Remarks

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President, IUP-APSCUF

(The following is an excerpt taken from my opening remarks to the IUP Community on August 26, 2016.)

Good Morning and welcome to the opening of the 2016–2017 academic year at IUP. On behalf of APSCUF, I am so pleased to have the opportunity to welcome you.

I personally find that in a world of unpredictability and uncertainty, I find comfort in the rhythm of the return to academic life in the fall. Hearing the band rehearse on campus, seeing the students move into their new homes, watching my calendar fill up with meetings and obligations, all tell me that it is time to refocus and reconnect on why I am here. Recently my 13-year-old daughter announced to me that she thought she might be experiencing an existential crisis. When I asked her what she meant by that, she stated that she was questioning the meaning and purpose of her life, wondering what she was placed on this earth to do, and worried that she might not find answers to those questions. While that may seem like a heady question for a young adolescent to be grappling with, in my field—counseling—it is a common theme I hear among my students and clients. I believe it is a question worth asking periodically—why do I do what I do? For some

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of you that question might look like “why do I teach...language, or math, or criminology, or physics?” For others, it might look like “Why do I work in residence life, or in administration, or on the grounds crew, or coaching?” Not in a “I need a paycheck” type of purpose, but in a “what is the meaning in my work” in the big picture. It can be easy to become encapsulated in what we do, so that we forget to check in with why are we doing it.

John F. Kennedy said “Let us think of education as the means of developing our greatest abilities, because in each of us there is a private hope and dream which, fulfilled, can be translated into benefit for everyone and greater strength for our nation.” For most of us the focus on developing our greatest abilities rests not just in the attainment of advanced degrees and making contributions to our professional disciplines, but also means fostering generativity in our professions by providing quality instruction to our students. John Tierney wrote “A college degree is the cornerstone of the American dream, opening the door to job opportunity and professional fulfillment, while increasing earning power by more than one million dollars over a lifetime. The world economy is extremely competitive and it is important to America’s economic prosperity and national security that every student in America has access to a college education.” Unfortunately, we are facing a critical situation that threatens this very access to a college education in the state of Pennsylvania.

Against the backdrop of the beauty of the campus and the anticipation of the new year is the reality that our faculty and coaches have been working under an expired contract for 423 days. While we have not compromised the quality of our work, we grow increasingly discontent with a state system that has failed to implore the PA general assembly to adequately fund higher education, and that has instead allowed tuition increases across the state system to place greater financial burden on students and their families, thereby making the possibility of higher education further out of reach for our

students. Currently, Pennsylvania ranks third highest in the nation for student loan debt. According to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, funding cuts are accompanied by tuition hikes and cuts in campus staff and programs, which in turn lead to a decline in the quality of education. Cuts to PA's higher education system are making college less affordable and are threatening the quality of education students receive at the state's public four year and community colleges (cbpp.org). Per student funding for PA's public colleges and universities is 33% below 2008 levels, while tuition costs have increased over \$2200. Only 5 states have cut higher education funding more than Pennsylvania (Arizona, Illinois, Louisiana, South Carolina and Alabama).

Having a highly educated workforce is critical to our economic future and we need a strong and high-quality higher education system to make that happen. Ensuring adequate investment in our state's colleges and universities requires that policymakers make sound decisions about how to raise and use resources. It is abundantly apparent in this geographical region that we need to diversify our workforce. No longer can we rely on single industries to support our communities and provide economic opportunities to our neighbors. When those industries fail, the entire region suffers. When students are deprived of opportunities to advance their knowledge and skills, they not only are limited in achieving their dreams but they are not able to contribute to the vitality of their communities.

To make this more personal, I'd like to share why this is important to me. You see, I am a first generation college student. I grew up in small town in Ohio, which was dependent upon the sources of Lake Erie for industry and manufacturing. My great-grandfather died in a coal mining accident in West Virginia; neither of my grandmothers finished high school. When my father was honorably discharged from the military during the Vietnam War era, he went to work as an electrical apprentice for General Electric, a company for which he worked until his retirement ten years ago. I remem-

ber him telling my mother that when their combined incomes reached \$100 per week, they would be set. I was a member of the working poor class, and higher education was a dream that my parents had for their children, but the reality was very unlikely. Vocations that were likely to be my path included unskilled labor. Although manufacturing seemed stable at that time, there was little to no economic growth, including new jobs available for high school graduates. Within six months of my father's retirement from GE, the plant in which he spent his entire working life closed. Soon most, if not all, remaining manufacturing and industry left the area as well—this left the area desolate with no substantial economic resources based outside of the local public schools, a privately run prison, and a hospital. My hometown exists on service related jobs, and has experienced the trappings that come with no hope and limited resources: increased crime and poverty, which in turn deters businesses and families who can contribute to the local tax base from moving into the area. At this time, the town I grew up in is not able to sustain a grocery store. If it were not for higher education, I would have few prospects available to me with which to exist, or raise my family. Higher education was the path out of poverty for my brothers and me. Higher education enabled us to expand our dreams, and create futures for our children that my parents and grandparents could only imagine. It provided opportunities that I never knew existed, and it forced me to consider perspectives that I had not encountered in my limited experience with the world.

When we do not demand that public education and higher education be adequately funded by the state, we are complicit in creating a situation in which we contribute to furthering the economic divide between those who have and those who do not. We perpetuate poverty in our state by failing to provide future generations with opportunities and we become morally bankrupt by limiting the social and economic opportunities that keep our citizens uneducated and untrained—unprepared for the work opportunities that our communities

need to be vital, vibrant, relevant. If students are not able to afford a quality education, if they are unable to show up in our universities, we educators cannot do what we do. Our colleges and universities cannot be vital, vibrant, and relevant. We will not be able to grow and adapt to the changing needs of a global economy.

Recently I read, as did many of you, that IUP was listed among Money Magazine's "Best Colleges" based on a "university's return on investment." In looking at demographic information provided in the profile, I learned that 45% of our students receive need-based aid, the average student debt amounts to \$27,000, while the average salary within 5 years of graduation is \$42,000. This is what an underfunded public higher education means for our students: higher debt that negatively impacts our graduates' abilities to buy homes, pay taxes, raise their children, and start their independent lives without being saddled by debt they needed to incur in order make a livable wage and to develop a meaningful career.

It is beyond reprehensible that our Chancellor has not only failed to demand adequate funding for higher education, but that he perpetuates an erroneous belief that the faculty who work for him work only 17 hours per week, are underworked and over-paid, and that this erroneous belief has gone unchallenged. The problem with higher education funding does not rest with the salary and benefits of the faculty. It rests with complacency in an underfunded state system of higher education. It rests with state legislators who are shortsighted in their vision for the commonwealth and believe that state owned universities operate similarly to grocery stores and vineyards, and who see our students as commodities rather than as the hope for our future. While touting the expense of the faculty as a contributing factor to rising tuition costs, the state system seems to have overlooked the proliferation of administrative positions that far outpace faculty positions over the past ten years, and ignored the substantial salary increases that have been granted to some administrators, while we are entering our second year with essentially a salary freeze.

When the state system seeks to allow our temporary faculty workforce to be exploited, requiring them to work more but not with additional compensation, they are essentially condoning a pay cut, while also limiting the opportunities for our adjunct colleagues who work on average 5–6 positions in order to piece together a career, and they limit their abilities to conduct meaningful research and service that would lead to career advancement in the process. They limit temporary faculty ability to be present for their students who value their connections to their professors and mentors. Please do not misunderstand this to mean that our temporary faculty members provide substandard instruction. No! I am saying that it is not okay to exploit a temporary workforce and perpetuate a pattern of underfunding higher education in the commonwealth.

If you were to ask me why I am willing to go on strike, this is why I am ready to take a stand. It is not merely about my salary and benefits. It is about the salary and benefits of my children and their generation, of the doctors, lawyers, scientists, mechanics, plumbers, and schoolteachers in my community, now and into the future. It is about the quality of their training and education and the integrity of our educational institutions. It is about the possibilities of what could be in the future, our future. John F Kennedy also said: “There are risks and costs to a program of action, but they are far less than the long-range risks and consequences of comfortable inaction.” In short, I do not want to strike, but I will if needed to ensure the opportunity of quality higher education for our current and future generations.

I do so confidently, because I know that I work with some of the most dedicated faculty a university could employ and with a local administration that believes in the practice of shared governance. Our cause is not against our local leadership; it is about the lack of regard our legislators and PASSHE have for their faculty and for public higher education in the Commonwealth. As we hope for the best and plan for the worst, I wish you a productive start to our fall semester.



APSCUF Negotiations Statement – 12/12/14

On Friday morning, December 12, 2014, negotiators representing the Association of Pennsylvania State College and University Faculties (APSCUF) and the State System of Higher Education met in Harrisburg. The collective bargaining agreement between the parties expires on June 30, 2015. APSCUF's negotiators focused on the Association's priorities of ensuring the availability of quality public higher education for Pennsylvania's working families and the ongoing need to attract and maintain high quality faculty to service students at Pennsylvania's 14 public universities. On Friday, APSCUF also announced that APSCUF Vice President Jamie S. Martin, Ph.D. of Indiana University of Pennsylvania will serve as the faculty negotiations team chairperson. Negotiators will next meet on March 20, 2015.



APSCUF Negotiations Statement – 6/12/2015

For Immediate Release

For more information contact:
Carrie Hillman 717-515-6846

The APSCUF negotiations team and representatives from the State System met this morning, June 12, at 10 a.m. The negotiations session quickly broke down over the issues of retrenchment and financial transparency. The next meeting of the two sides is scheduled for Friday, June 19, 2015 at the Dixon University Center in Harrisburg.



Negotiations Update – 9/22/2015

For Immediate Release

For more information contact:

Carrie Hillman 717-515-6846

Negotiators for the Association of Pennsylvania State College and University Faculties (APSCUF) and the State System of Higher Education met yesterday, Monday, September 21, 2015, at the Dixon University Center in Harrisburg. The two sides continued to discuss the retrenchment article and began conversations about criminal background checks as they were required to by the Commonwealth Court order. Negotiations are scheduled to continue October 12, 2015 at the APSCUF office in Harrisburg.



State System Rejects Contract Compromise, Proposes that Faculty Pay Thousands More for Healthcare

For Immediate Release

For more information, contact:

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The State System today rejected the one-year compromise the Association of Pennsylvania State College and University Faculties proposed in mid-October.

Pennsylvania's State System of Higher Education countered with a proposal that would cost faculty members thousands of dollars more for healthcare.

APSCUF, which represents about 5,500 faculty and coaches at the State System universities, could not agree to such major changes, President Dr. Kenneth M. Mash said.

Neither the contract deal Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Wolf reached with the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees nor the contract the State System

reached with the State College and University Professional Association contained changes to healthcare costs. Earlier this week, the State System unilaterally increased health-care costs and changed benefits for its managers.

“It is simply unacceptable for the State System to treat its faculty differently than other state employees,” Mash said. “We believe they wanted to sabotage our concessionary one-year offer with incendiary changes to our healthcare.

“We are a democratic organization, and we will go back to our members to see how they want us to proceed. It’s nothing short of absurd that amid an atmosphere of uncertainty, the System would act so provocatively toward its faculty.”

Without a contract, it becomes more difficult for faculty and coaches to provide a quality education for the more than 100,000 students enrolled in the commonwealth’s 14 publicly owned universities, Mash said.

The deal APSCUF offered in October was in line with the one negotiated between the governor and AFSCME. The System had reached similar agreements with its other unions. The offer included a one-year interim contract and a step increase effective in January. It also called for a continuation of monies for faculty research and for monthly reporting of membership data.

The State System universities are Bloomsburg, California, Cheyney, Clarion, East Stroudsburg, Edinboro, Indiana, Kutztown, Lock Haven, Mansfield, Millersville, Shippensburg, Slippery Rock and West Chester Universities of Pennsylvania.

