Reflections on a Season of Giving

As we rush toward winter break each year, I like to take a few moments to reflect on the many highlights of the fall semester and anticipate the holiday season.

For Robbie and me and our institution’s many donors and friends, a high point of the semester was the series of events to kick off the public phase of *It’s Personal: The Campaign for Bloomsburg University*. Over the course of 10 days in October, we joined with members of the campus community for a rally on the Quad and celebrated at launch events here and in Philadelphia (shown above). The gifts we have received and continue to receive as we head toward our $50 million goal will enhance our students’ experiences today and in the future. To all who have a personal connection with our outstanding university, I say “thank you.”

Another fall highlight occurred very late in the semester when we welcomed our new director of external and government relations, Dan Knorr ’07. Most recently, Dan was the Borough of Danville’s administrator of government affairs, but many will remember him from his term as mayor of Bloomsburg. In his new position, Dan is monitoring legislation and public policy, seeking opportunities for state and federal funding and economic development, and building relationships. He fills a vacancy created by Jim Hollister’s retirement.

Then there is the highlight still to come for all of us: gathering with family and friends at this special time of year for rest, relaxation and renewal. Robbie and I wish you peace and happiness during this festive season and in the year ahead.

David L. Soltz, Ph.D.
President
Tearing Down Prison Walls

Incarcerated Women: Rehabilitative Programming in Women’s Prisons was a course offered for the first time in fall 2015 at the State Correctional Institution (SCI) in Muncy, near Williamsport. BU students commuted to the prison to attend the class taught by criminal justice professional John Adami. Their classmates were incarcerated women serving time at the prison.

Modeled after the Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program started at Temple University in 1997, the course is designed to expose students directly to various aspects of the prison environment by having inmates and students interact and collaborate in a classroom setting. The course gives BU students exposure to career opportunities in correctional facilities and a unique perspective on working in criminal justice. Inmates are given the opportunity to share their personal experiences and prepare for their eventual return to society.

ZIPD Business Conference

More than 100 BU alumni from companies including Crayola, PepsiCo and Comcast presented information and interacted with students during the annual Zeigler Institute for Professional Development (ZIPD) Business Conference in October. These all-day sessions gave students the opportunity to learn about their future careers, share resumes and network with potential future employers.

The conference provides real-world business education to students through experiences that develop their personal and professional skill sets. A strategic priority for the College of Business, the conference is part of the Zeigler Institute for Professional Development, created through an endowment established by Terry Zeigler ‘76, president and CEO of DataCap Systems Inc., and his wife JoAnn Schultz Zeigler ‘77.
COST Career Day

The College of Science and Technology held its Career Day on October 16. Student attendees were able to interact with professional alumni, businesses and organizations for networking and possible career and research opportunities, internships and graduate studies. There were discussion sessions, business and organizational booths, and a free networking lunch available to students.

The COST Career Day serves to educate students and faculty about the importance of professional development for students in scientific fields. Providing an opportunity for current students to share in the experiences of former students in their respective professions is invaluable. It gives them evidence that professional development and intense experiential learning are important for careers in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM).

TRiO receives 5-year grant

BU’s TRiO Student Support Services was awarded a five-year federal grant from the U.S. Department of Education, effective September 1, 2015. The grant is funded for $268,487 annually and totals more than $1.3 million over the five-year period.

TRiO is a federally funded program that motivates and supports students from disadvantaged backgrounds with academic need in their pursuit of a college degree, including first-generation, low-income, disabled, veteran and nontraditional students. TRiO provides academic tutoring, personal counseling, mentoring, financial guidance, and other support necessary to increase educational access and retention across the university. BU’s TRiO program had a retention rate of 99 percent and a 98 percent Good Academic Standing rate for each year in the last five-year grant cycle.

BU partners with German university

Heiko Struder, president, and Gerard King, director of international studies, at the German Sport University, Cologne, Germany, visited BU recently. They met with BU President David Soltz, gave presentations to the Department of Exercise Science, and discussed future collaboration between the two institutions. Studer and King toured the campus and BU’s sports facilities. BU is hosting two exchange students from the German Sport University this academic year.

New College Administrators

Mark Tapsak, associate professor of chemistry and biochemistry, was appointed as the College of Science and Technology’s acting assistant dean this fall. New assistants to the dean were welcomed by two other colleges this fall – Rona Anderson, College of Liberal Arts, and David Vázquez-González, College of Education. Joan Benek-Rivera continues to serve as assistant to the dean for the College of Business.
The 34th Athletic Hall of Fame class, inducted on Friday, October 9, includes Dale Sullivan ’61, a two-time Pennsylvania State Athletic Conference (PSAC) place-winner for the Huskies wrestling team; Michelle Martin Custer ’97, a two-time All-American for the field hockey team and 1996 National Player of the Year; Kim Stamm ’96, BU’s 11th all-time leading scorer for the women’s basketball team; Rob Dixon ’99, whose career record of 104-35 for the men’s tennis team has him ranked sixth on BU’s all-time list; and Marcus Nilsson ’99, a 12-time PSAC champion who was Dixon’s partner in the winningest men’s tennis doubles team in BU history. The number of members in the Bloomsburg University Athletic Hall of Fame is now 163.
New Name: MyHusky

BU’s PeopleSoft Student Information System – formerly referred to as ISIS – has a new name: MyHusky. The functionality and sign-on capabilities of the system have not changed. MyHusky continues to be used by students, applicants, faculty and staff for course registration, admissions, billing, grades, financial aid and numerous other related student services. Users also continue to use their Husky ID and password to access the MyHusky student information system at bloomu.edu/myhusky.

Nominations for Herring Developing Student Leadership Scholarship

Current sophomores and juniors in good standing are eligible to apply for the H. Preston Herring Developing Student Leadership Scholarship. Student applicants must exhibit some of the late H. Preston Herring’s most admirable leadership qualities: service, modesty and commitment. Students nominated for this award should have demonstrated leadership and service to the Town of Bloomsburg and the Bloomsburg University community through volunteering, community employment and active participation in on-campus organizations. Nominees should demonstrate character, developmental growth while attending BU, and perhaps have overcome adversity. Nominations should be sent to the Division of Student Affairs by 11 p.m. on Sunday, January 25, 2016.

Herring served as BU’s vice president for Student Affairs from March 1, 1995, until his death in 2009.

Updates on Retention Efforts

In an effort to identify and support student scheduling needs, BU has implemented an electronic process on MyHusky that allows students to wait-list up to seven credits. The initiative will support the timely scheduling and completion of courses so that students can remain on track for graduation.

Other retention efforts:

A student calling program is under way to further support retention efforts. Continuing students who do not have classes scheduled for the spring 2016 semester and others whose schedules have fewer than eight credits are being contacted.

Recently, a proactive outreach to scheduling transfer students was implemented with the goal of improving timeliness in transfer student advisement. College deans are working with the department chairs to monitor progress.

BU continues to expand its usage of the Student Success Collaborative (SSC), a technology-based tool to assist students and advisers in the student advising process. Historical data and predictive analytics are used to guide discussions and advising plans that support both student progress and timely retention-to-completion efforts.

Winter Session

Winter Session will run for 18 days, from Monday, December 14, to Friday, January 15, with a break from Thursday, December 24, through Sunday, January 3. A maximum of seven credits can be taken during the winter term. Online courses also are being offered.
Campus Construction Updates

The new Andruss Library extension, which includes space for the BU Police and university telecommunications department, is complete. Telecommunications equipment placement will occur during December, and the physical move-in for both departments is scheduled for January.

Other upcoming projects:

The Town of Bloomsburg project to upgrade the intersection between Lightstreet and Country Club roads will be managed by PennDOT and funded by CGA and a $350,000 grant from the Appalachian Regional Commission. The project is currently obtaining property right-of-way clearance, and is projected to be completed during the summer of 2016.

A contract has been awarded for the construction of a pedestrian bridge over Lightstreet Road. The land has been cleared of trees and the initial foundation work has begun. Completion is projected for July 2016.

Budget Update (as of December 8)

Governor Tom Wolf and the state Legislature continue to work on passage of a state budget. The largest increase currently under discussion for Pennsylvania’s State System of Higher Education is 5 percent or approximately $20 million. If approved, this will provide increased funding to the State System for the first time in four years, but is $25.3 million less than the governor’s original budget request.

In an effort to assist students affected by the state budget impasse, BU disbursed estimated 2015-16 Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency (PHEAA) state grants in late October. By awarding the estimated PHEAA state grants, BU also issued refunds if the grants placed accounts in an overpayment situation. The budget impasse has not affected students’ ability to register for spring 2016 classes.

Effective January 1, 2016, the State System will implement selected changes to the health care plan that is offered to nonrepresented (management) employees, nurses and security/police personnel. These changes will provide immediate and long-term cost savings, while allowing the State System to offer one of the best health care programs in the marketplace.
University Advancement

Faculty Fellows

Three faculty members will receive **inaugural fellowships** established as a result of the It’s Personal campaign. Each two-year term includes an annual award stipend of $2,500 to augment scholarship and create professional and applied learning opportunities for students.

The faculty honorees and their fellowships are:

Mark Bauman, Vicki and Jack Mihalik Fellowship in the College of Education

Stephen Clickard, Jack and Helen Evans Fellowship in the College of Liberal Arts

Victoria Geyfman, Michael and Bree Gillespie Fellowship in the College of Business

The faculty will officially receive their designations during fall commencement.

Going Mobile

This fall, Bloomsburg University launched the first phase of its website’s mobile-first, flat responsive design. The rollout will continue in phases throughout the next year with redesigned landing pages for each College, admissions, prospective students, parents and campus visitors.

A key feature in the mobile design is the top rotating banner, which tells BU’s story through students, alumni, faculty and staff. The content offers the information prospective students seek by highlighting academic excellence, collaborative learning and BU’s personal connection.

Mobile traffic to bloomu.edu has tripled in each of the last three years and become the preferred method of online use for prospective and current students. The redesign provides an interface with a stronger focus on the mobile user.

Center for Professional Development and Career Experience

Three hundred students participated in the **Center for Professional Development and Career Experience**’s Career and Internship Expo, held on November 3 in Kehr Union, a significant increase in attendance over last year’s expo. The annual expo brings together employers and graduate school representatives to showcase opportunities for students.

The Center for Professional Development and Career Experience will host its first Career Bootcamp in February, with the goal of preparing juniors and seniors in transitioning to professional life and assisting with students’ job or graduate school searches.