This year marks a milestone for Bloomsburg University as we commemorate 175 years of academic excellence. Our institution has grown throughout the decades with name changes to reflect its expanding mission, from literary institute and normal school to state teachers college and state college before becoming Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania in 1983 when the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education was established.

Our observance of 175 years of academic excellence celebrates the values that form Bloomsburg’s foundation: collaboration, community, critical thinking, diversity, excellence, integrity, knowledge, opportunity, respect and personal and professional growth. Now, as in 1839, Bloomsburg builds on these values, establishing a strong reputation advanced by the faculty’s passion for teaching and learning, hard-working students, staff, alumni and a strategic vision for the future.

I hope you enjoy learning about Bloomsburg University’s role in furthering the mission of public education in this annual report and at our website, www.bloomu.edu.

David L. Soltz, President
Bloomsburg University
It’s not an exaggeration to say that the positive economic impact generated by Bloomsburg University touches virtually every corner of the surrounding community and region.

“The impact of the students, faculty and staff from Bloomsburg radiates out and provides an enormous economic impact to the local community,” says Jeffrey Mandel, the university’s procurement officer. “We have a really good relationship with the town, as well. The town understands the impact that we have and we understand the need to have a good relationship with them.”

The university’s direct presence is felt from the millions it spends annually on goods and service. As Columbia County’s largest employer, BU’s impact is also felt in the dollars spent on everything from housing to food and entertainment by its more than 10,000 students, their families and approximately 1,500 full- and part-time faculty and staff.

But such direct spending only captures one part of BU’s economic importance. Harder to quantify, yet just as significant, are the many collaborations occurring daily between faculty, staff and students and the local business community; partnerships that provide valuable advice and assistance to area firms while, at the same time, giving students invaluable real-world training.

BU is one of 14 institutions in the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PASSHE) with a total enrollment of 112,000 students, 80 percent of whom remain in the state after graduation. A 2011 PASSHE study found that the more than 500,000 alumni from the system’s universities generate an aggregate annual income of $7 billion.

Operating expenses generated by the 14 universities pump an estimated $1.6 billion a year into the commonwealth’s economy, according to the report. Spending by students for non-college-related items is worth another $324 million annually.

Here’s a look at some specific ways Bloomsburg University contributes to the local and regional economy:

BLOOMSBURG UNIVERSITY AND STUDENT AID

About 84 percent of Bloomsburg’s students received $105 million in student assistance, grants and salaries from work study programs in 2012-13, says John J. Bieryla, the university’s director of financial aid. Combining all sources, the average student receives about $12,400 in assistance.

Specifically, aid categories break down as follows:
- $72 million in loan assistance
- $29 million in grants and tuition waivers
- $4 million in compensation paid through work study programs or graduate assistantships
Economic Driver

Continued from previous page

“From grants and academic scholarships to tuition waivers, financial aid plays a big role,” Bieryla says. “We would not be able to enroll the type of students we want without this kind of assistance.”

PUTTING BUS’ EXPERTISE TO WORK HELPING THE LOCAL ECONOMY

“Many businesses, nonprofits and volunteer groups have a need for data to help them make decisions, from what kind of events to hold to the kind of advertising that works,” says Heather Feldhaus, director for the university’s Center for Community Research and Consulting, which opened in 2012.

“Roughly 200 student volunteers work with faculty on any number of studies,” says Feldhaus, also assistant dean in the College of Liberal Arts. “Our students have the opportunity to gain real research experience and our communities are able to get high-quality information that is truly local.”

For example, students are working with the Danville (Pa.) Business Alliance to assess the economic benefits of a planned bike trail that the Danville (Pa.) Business Alliance to assess the economic benefits of a planned bike trail that would be funded through the Susquehanna Keystone Innovative Zone (GSKIZ), a state-sponsored program that provides tax credits and grants for new firms.

The GSKIZ is a cooperative venture between the state and BU, as well as Bucknell and Susquehanna universities, which have their own local zones.

The region’s zone has spurred the development of eight companies in addition to OPTIMO and the entire zone helped to create 63 new jobs and retain 176 jobs in the past year.

“It provides opportunities to link our students with companies that are just starting out,” Fletcher says. “When we talk about what the university can do for the community, this is a real example of how we can help and, at the same time, teach our students about entrepreneurship.”

In 2012, BU opened its Entrepreneurial Leadership Center (ELC), dedicated to providing guidance and encouragement to students interested in forming their own businesses. Also located in the technology center, the ELC helps students assess whether their idea is viable and gives them a chance to seek funding and open in the GSKIZ. The ELC also offers programs for area high school students and in June 2013 hosted 31 students for an “Entrepreneurship Boot Camp.”

Funded by a three-year grant from the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PASSHE), the ELC is run by Fletcher and Karl Kapp, professor of instructional technology.

“It’s a way to stop ‘brain drain’ and give students the chance to have success here,” Fletcher says. “If they can draw support from the local region, they’ll be more likely to stay in the area and create their business here.”
Cuban jazz? A Broadway show? Classical music? Classical dance? Classical music and dance together? How about a chance to sample dishes from around the world?

For students and area residents, Bloomsburg University offers a window into many cultures and points of view through events and lectures, as well as an opportunity to experience entertainment usually not available in rural communities.

“The majority of our students and visitors come from our immediate region,” says Jim Hollister, assistant vice president for external relations. “We have the ability to bring in people from other countries and backgrounds and give people a firsthand look at something they may otherwise see only on TV or in a magazine.

“Hopefully, these activities help people expand their knowledge of people by broadening their perspective,” Hollister says. “Promoting this kind of understanding is one of the roles of an institution of higher learning.”

Eight to 10 times a year, Bloomsburg University delivers a taste of big-city entertainment through its Celebrity Artist Series.

“We do a Broadway show or two every year, as well as bringing in different artists and genres,” Hollister says. Among the musical performances in 2013 were Grammy Award-winning jazz singer Luciana Souza with Brazilian guitarist Romero Lubambo; the sound of 1970s soul by Motown and More; and the acoustic folk music of Dala, which won the Canadian Folk Music Award for Vocal Group of the Year.

Shows included Ballroom with a Twist, a Broadway-style adaptation of TV shows Dancing With the Stars and So You Think You Can Dance?; the zany fun of the National Broadway Tour of Monty Python’s Spamalot; and L.A. Theatre Works’ presentation of The Graduate.

Learning about different cultures

Every February, BU hosts civil rights speakers who share their message at the Martin Luther King Jr. commemorative program. The 2013 keynote speaker, former NAACP Chairman Julian Bond, discussed how race shapes history; the February 2014 speaker is Myrlie Evers-Williams, widow of slain civil rights leader Medgar Evers. Past speakers included Bishop Desmond Tutu’s daughter, Naomi Tutu, and Mohandas Gandhi’s grandson, Arun Gandhi.

Every February, BU’s Multicultural Center sponsors about 30 programs a year, including the King program, to expose students and the community to a wide range of viewpoints and beliefs. Guest speakers included Candace Gingrich-Jones, who talked about her work as an LGBT activist; writer Marta Aponte Alsina, who spoke about Puerto Rican literature; and MSNBC commentator Keith Boykin, who discussed politics and LGBT issues within the black community.

Madelyn Rodriguez, director of multicultural affairs, says she doesn’t measure success solely on how many attend. “If students share the information they have learned from an event, I have done my job.”

“When employers give us feedback about our students, one of the things we want to make sure they can say is our students are well-rounded people,” says Dione Somerville, vice president for Student Affairs. “We want employers to say our students can communicate, have good interpersonal skills, and embrace diversity and the values of the organization.”

From folk to Spamalot

The touring production of Spamalot brought Monty Pythonesque humor to the Bloomsburg community as part of the Celebrity Artist Series.

Video Bonus: Jazz at Bloomsburg

Stephen Clickard, chair of the department of music, theatre and dance, talks about his own career in music and the significance of jazz and its role in music education. See the video: www.youtube.com/user/BloomUniversity
Community experiences

From lectures about religion and health topics to showcasing the art of various cultures, Bloomsburg University offers a wide array of experiences that are available to the community. Here’s a look at just some of what BU offered in 2013:

Speaker Series: Speakers included noted civil rights leader Julian Bond, Rebecca Funk Campbell, a BU alumna and president of the ABC-Owned Television Station Group; and Drug Enforcement Agency agent Michael Levine, who talked about life undercover.

Taste of the Arts: Held in downtown Bloomsburg, the annual spring event draws more than 500 people for four hours of free student entertainment. “We have performances every 15 minutes and it’s almost like a fair in some ways,” says James Brown, dean of the College of Liberal Arts. Performances run from poetry readings to dance, and art activities are offered for children. “We want the community to come to programs on campus; hopefully, this gives them a taste of what we have to offer.”

Conversation on Religions: Over the course of the year, Bloomsburg offered free seminars exploring the major religions — Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism and Christianity. “It’s important that as a university we enrich the intellectual life of the community.”

Health Sciences Symposium: From suicide prevention to overcoming obesity, BU offers annual symposiums each April that explore the important medical issues of the day. The 22nd annual Health Sciences Symposium and Wellness Fair focused on Alzheimer’s disease and featured a performance and talk by Grammy Award-winning singer Kathy Mattea.

International Banquet: Each spring the more than 100 international students at Bloomsburg host a banquet that brings campus and community leaders together. The banquet features international cuisine, music and dance performances and a fashion show of clothing from around the world.

Remembering Lee’s devastation: The close bonds forged in the wake of the extensive flooding caused by Tropical Storm Lee were explored in Flood Stories, Too, a two-act play written and directed by Gerald Stropnicky, emeritus member of Bloomsburg Theatre Ensemble, and performed at the downtown Alvina Krause Theatre. Characters ranged from students to victims to volunteers, and included BU President David Soltz and former Bloomsburg Mayor Dan Knorr.

A healthy partnership

Cooperative agreements between the university and Geisinger Health System are designed to help meet the Commonwealth’s increasing need for highly qualified nurses.

Before 2013, Bloomsburg’s nursing program could accept just 80 new students each year, says Michelle Ficca, chair of the nursing department. An arrangement to use Geisinger Medical Center’s campus now allows the program to accept another 40, who complete freshman science and general education courses at the Bloomsburg campus and all courses during their sophomore through senior years at the Danville, Pa., site.

Beginning next year, the Danville center also will host the university’s accelerated nursing degree program, enabling students with undergraduate degrees and the prerequisite science courses to earn a nursing degree in 18 months.

Additionally, Geisinger and Bloomsburg are partnering to offer nursing master degrees, including a Master of Science in Nursing—clinical specialization in nurse anesthetists and nurse practitioners. Bloomsburg will also offer a two-year Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) program for nurses interested in improving their clinical skills. The DNP program will begin in 2015 and be conducted mainly through online instruction.

As Geisinger has expanded throughout the state, Bloomsburg nurses and nurse practitioners have gained clinical experience and full-time employment opportunities with the health system. “We wouldn’t be able to offer our program if we didn’t have this relationship with Geisinger,” Ficca says. “The clinical experiences the students receive are fantastic. We are very fortunate to have access to a large medical center that also has a children’s hospital and a women’s clinic where students get experience that many other schools can’t offer.”
Committed to serve

Ask Tim Pelton about Bloomsburg University’s relationship with the surrounding community and he immediately points to the devastating flooding caused by Tropical Storm Lee in September 2011. “The campus was closed for seven days, but many of the students who remained, as well as staff and faculty, went through the town and helped clean up after the flooding,” says Tim Pelton, the university’s civic engagement coordinator.

“I was a flood victim and all the wet and muddy carpeting in my house was torn out by the professors in the environmental, geographical and geological sciences department,” he says.

“I remember looking at the mess and trying to figure out how I was going to get it out, and then they came and did it for me.”

A good neighbor

From fundraisers for worthy causes, playground cleanups and home repairs for those in need, Pelton estimates Bloomsburg contributes about 68,000 hours of service every year, with an estimated value of $1.4 million. Many of those hours come from activities organized by the school’s fraternities and sororities and another 15,000 hours come from academic classes in which students work with various nonprofit agencies.

The university’s SOLVE office — SOLVE stands for Students Organized to Learn through Volunteerism and Employment — organizes some of the charitable efforts and serves as a resource to connect students with organizations that need their help. The annual Empty Bowls Banquet, where donated gourmet soups are sold to raise money for the Bloomsburg Food Cupboard, and the National Day of Service are good examples of SOLVE’s organized activities. The most recent day of caring, coinciding with Nelson Mandela’s birthday, involved more than 230 students who helped nonprofit agencies throughout the community.

Another major volunteer effort each year, The Big Event, is sponsored by BU’s Community Government Association. On a Saturday morning in April 2013, about 1,700 students spread out across the town to complete spring clean-up projects as a way to say “thank you” to their home-away-from-home. Projects during the fourth annual Big Event included painting, raking leaves and helping with small repairs.

“For the past four years in a row, Bloomsburg has been named in the President’s Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll for the amount of community service we do,” Pelton says. “I think our students learn important lessons in improving quality of life. They see the difference they can make.”

Helping to meet medical needs

Some of students’ out-of-classroom activities offer opportunities for them to gain experience in their fields while providing an important service to the public. Nowhere is that more evident than the Audiology Hearing Clinic, where faculty and students help those with speech and hearing problems.

The clinic sees more than 500 audiology-related patients a year, providing services from testing newborns’ hearing at Geisinger-Bloomsburg Hospital, located across the street from the campus, to diagnosing balance issues, such as vertigo, and fine-tuning Cochlear implants. Speech pathology students and faculty work with patients on issues ranging from stuttering and swallowing disorders to helping individuals speak with the aid of specialized devices. The clinic also provides speech-language pathology services to students in two nearby school districts, Southern Columbia and Central Columbia.

Jorge Gonzalez, the clinic’s director, says the experience is required as part of the certification process for students in the audiology and speech language-pathology program. “We are able to provide services you might find in other clinics in the area, as well as specialized services not locally available, such as the balance clinic,” he says. “We offer Bloomsburg residents services normally found in larger cities or at research facilities.”

Also looking out for the health of Bloomsburg area residents is a partnership between Geisinger-Bloomsburg Hospital and BU’s exercise science department, which established a cardiac rehabilitation program for adults 18 and older who have known stable heart disease. The program is designed to reduce patients’ risk for heart disease by increasing their level of regular exercise and physical activity.

Exercise science graduate students work with participants to develop individualized programs and supervise the hour-long workout sessions, held Monday through Thursday. Participants pay $120 per semester for the program, which also provides information about exercises they can do at home.

So far, the cardiac rehabilitation exercise program has assisted 25 patients, says Timothy McConnell, chair of the exercise science department and director of the program, including one person who lost 20 pounds.

“On average the patients have increased their exercise capacity by 70 percent,” McConnell says. “The average weight loss has been 8 pounds.”

‘Green’ Campus

From sponsoring an on-campus farmer’s market every Friday in the fall and organizing tree plantings throughout the town to holding talks on Marcellus shale drilling and climate change, the university is focused on a number of ongoing “green” initiatives, many supported by the Green Campus Initiative (GCI).

Recent projects include a solar array panel in a kiosk outside Ben Franklin Hall that gives details of the campus’ energy use; an enhanced recycling system, part of an expanded agreement with the Town of Bloomsburg Recycling Center; and installation of LED lighting in the tri-level parking garage and classroom buildings hallways and stairwells as part of an effort to reduce overall energy consumption by 20 percent.

Many of the university’s green-related activities, such as the ongoing environmental-related talks held at the downtown Moose Exchange, are intended to bring students, faculty and the community together, says Jeff Brunskill, associate professor of environmental, geographical and geological sciences and co-chair of GCI.

“It gives the community the ability to see how great our students are and the positive things that are occurring on campus,” Brunskill says.
STEM partnership gives high school a taste of college

At the same time area high schools were looking for ways to challenge their top students, local companies were decrying the lack of qualified engineers. Bloomsburg University provided the perfect solution to both problems: allow gifted students to take the courses necessary to create the skilled workforce sought by the region’s employers.

In 2013, 17 high school juniors took part in the university’s new STEM Magnet Program, which challenges the students with college-level instruction in the STEM fields – science, technology, engineering and math.

“These are the students their teachers call the ‘high fliers’ who are at the top of their classes and benefit from interacting with other students in the area who are also high achievers,” says Elizabeth Mauch, dean of the College of Education. “We challenge them by giving them university-level courses so they are prepared for the rigorous workload when they go to college.”

The program also links students with mentors from the business community, connections that could lead to internships and job offers. In 2014-15, the plan is to expand the program to include both juniors and seniors and open it to about 40 students, including the 17 now enrolled.

“We found many of the students don’t realize there are high-paying jobs right here,” Mauch says. “Putting them together with business mentors helps the students see what opportunities are available and the mentors can spur them on as they go through their college career.”

Area businesses including PPL Electric Utilities, USG Corp., Merck & Co. Inc. and Kawneer; part of Alcoa, donated funds to underwrite the annual cost of $3,500 per student. Moving forward, Mauch says, students will likely bear some of the cost with scholarships awarded based on need and merit.

Students who remain in the program for two years can earn up to 30 college credits. These credits will allow the students to take slightly lighter course loads when they enter college full-time or to complete their college degrees sooner.

There’s another aspect to Bloomsburg’s program that sets it apart from similar efforts elsewhere: location. “The innovation in this program is that it’s sitting in a rural area,” Mauch says. “This is the kind of program that wouldn’t be possible without a university presence.”

Indeed, the STEM Magnet Program underscores Bloomsburg’s mission. “We are here to be a resource to this region and prepare students for personal and professional success. And that includes the area’s high school students,” Mauch says. “We see this as our contribution to the region.”

Bloomburg University Profile

Bloomburg University of Pennsylvania is one of the 14 public universities in the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education. It was founded as the Bloomsburg Literary Institute in 1839.

Enrollment: About 10,000 undergraduate and graduate students.

Programs: 54 undergraduate programs and 17 graduate programs.

Faculty: Nearly 400 full-time, most with doctoral degrees.

Campus: 282 acres, 54 buildings, a short walk from downtown Bloomsburg. Seven modern residence halls and three apartment complexes on campus, six dining facilities, student union, recreation center, university store, library and intercollegiate sports facilities.

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