

STATE OF THE NATION ADDRESS

PRESIDENT MARVIN KRISLOV

Wednesday, February 23, 2022

Colleagues, students, friends from the Kessel Student Center on our Pleasantville Campus, good afternoon. And thank you, Kim, for that warm introduction.

Before we begin today, I want to pause to remember Jordan Robinson, who passed away ten days ago. I was not lucky enough to know Jordan, but everything I have heard about him makes me sad that I didn't. He was a remarkable young man, kind, caring, giving, and optimistic. He made life better for people around him, and he had big plans to change the world.

Our community is devastated by this loss and, as I have told his parents and his friends, we send them all our support. Please join me in a brief moment of silence to honor Jordan's memory.

Thank you.

Now I want to move into a broad look at our Pace Community, and where things stand on our campuses. To do that, I want to start by reporting three numbers.

First, 2.2 percent. That is the current COVID-19 positivity rate in Westchester County, down from about 23 percent on January 1.

Second, 1.3 percent. That is the current positivity rate in New York City, also down from about 23 percent on January 1.

And finally, zero. That is the total number of Pace students currently in quarantine or isolation on any of our campuses.

With that in mind, I am pleased to say that the state of our University and the state of our community is very strong.

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I know it is risky to proclaim that we are through the worst. But based on what we are seeing and reading, based Gov. Hochul's decision to relax mandates in New York, based on updates

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classrooms and on elevators, for those who are exempt from the vaccine requirement, and in certain other situations. Anyone who chooses to wear a mask will always be welcome to. Other things will change, too. And if current trends stay on track, I hope that we'll be able to announce that move with full details as soon as next week.

That makes today an ideal time for us to look ahead to a new and improved future for Pace University.

Yes, we will return we have returned to those parts of the old normal that are central to what we do to in-person classes and activities, to building community and supporting one another, to teaching and learning, to research and internships, to seeing one another in hallways and chatting in dining halls.

But at the same time, we will take the lessons of the last two years, and we will build them into everything we do. We will be more flexible and more adaptable. We will make more use of technology. We will teach and learn remotely for those who need it. We will work remotely where it makes sense.

Because in the last two years we have become experts on all those things, too.

Before I talk more about the future, I want to take a minute to acknowledge the past. Perhaps the most profound lesson of the past two years was seeing just how strong this community is. We say that the people of Pace are go-getters, and through 23 long months of pandemic, all of us all of you continued to do what we needed to do.

Our University operated. Our faculty taught. Our students learned.

Be calm.

Be calm.

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decline, as colleges and universities did nationwide. For this year, that national trend continued.

But at Pace this year, things are different.

This fall we enrolled our largest class of incoming first-year students of the 21st century as far back as we have good records. We currently enroll more graduate students than we have this century. At Haub Law, our enrollment is the highest it has been in at least ten years.

Overall, our total enrollment is up about 5 percent from last year and just about even with where it was pre-pandemic again, against a backdrop of significant enrollment decreases nationwide. And our application numbers for next year are trending even better.

Students are choosing to be at Pace.

Those strong enrollment numbers, combined with aggressive expense management and, yes, federal aid in the past year, left us in the strongest budget position we have been in for some time. We ended the 2020-2021 fiscal year with a small surplus.

This year, we are once again forecasting a surplus with no special aid and we are likely to report our best operating result in years. This is thanks to all our budget discipline and the work and commitment of so many. It is very good news.

We have eliminated or nearly eliminated operating deficits in Pleasantville and at Haub Law, and across all of our schools and colleges. This is also very good news.

And it is due to the hard work and strategic, resourceful thinking of a great number of people Provost Vanya Quiñones, who led that effort, together with the finance team, the deans, their faculties, and the many staff members who have taken on more responsibilities. Thank you all for your efforts to help us achieve these goals.

I want to pause for a moment to talk about the word surplus. In many ways, it is a misnomer. A surplus suggests we have extra money, money to spare. As we know, that is not the case. The Strategic Plan we worked together to develop over these last few years calls for a target surplus of 4 percent. We are not there yet. But surpluses are important because they enable us to invest.

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They do not mean we can be wasteful. But they do mean we can breathe easier. They mean we can invest in the people and programs that will build our ambitious future.

When I look back at this last year, I realize that even as we faced profound struggles, we also saw remarkable success. We kept our trend lines moving in the right direction. And we continued to accomplish so many of those individual triumphs that together make up this inspiring community.

Our students continued to show all the ways in which they are hard-working, ambitious, world-conquering go-getters.

In the last academic year, one Pace student won a Fulbright. Nine were named Millennium Fellows. And two won the Jeannette Watson Fellowship. Our inaugural Schwartzman Scholar completed her master's in global affairs at the University of Cambridge.

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students helps our finances, helps our rankings, and, most importantly, ensures that we deliver the promise of Opportunitas to as many students as possible.

With last May's graduates, our six-year graduation rate reached 59 percent – the fourth consecutive year of increase and the highest that rate has been in at least 20 years. And this year's number is poised to be even better.

That, too, is a big success.

I want to be clear: Students achieve these successes, but they get there thanks to the work of our dedicated faculty and staff. We know the faculty is the heart and soul of Pace. And even as they have supported students through this challenging time, they have also maintained their research, continued their scholarly output, and kept winning grants.

To name just a few highlights:

For the first time ever this year, Pace won New York State Economic Development Council grants to help expand and revitalize state-of-the-art training labs – one for the College of Health Professions in New York City and the other for Dyson in Westchester. At Haub Law, it seems clear that the New York State budget this year will include \$225,000 earmarked to support our Food and Beverage Law Clinic. Dyson and School of Education faculty won big grants from the New York State Department of Education. Seidenberg faculty won big grants from the National Science Foundation and the National Institutes of Health.

Indeed, last year Seidenberg's Zhan Zhang became the first Pace professor with grants from both the NSF and the NIH. And Dyson Professor Michelle Chase won a very prestigious fellowship from the National Endowment for the Humanities for her research on 20th century Cuba.

Our successes through the pandemic extend to other realms, too.

For example, fundraising. Despite the suspension of nearly all in-person alumni and philanthropic events, in 2020–2021 we raised more than \$17.5 million. It was our single best year ever – except for 2016, when we received the transformative Haub gift to the Law School. And this year looks to be even better.

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with the many diverse communities in which we recruit and hire. We must become an even better place to work, with more transparent internal communication and more resources.

This spring, we will be conducting the Great Colleges To Work For survey, which is a chance for us to hear what we're doing well and where we need to improve. We will be surveying all fulltime employees faculty and staff, plus adjunct faculty and we will be acting on the results. We are committed to repeating this survey at a regular cadence.

We know that some areas have been hard hit by the Great Resignation, and we are working to address that. Ensuring that Pace is an employer of choice will help us attract and retain talent.

We are also moving ahead with the real estate plans that will set us up for future success. In New York City, the One Pace Plaza West renovation is finished giving us a beautiful new

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crises; we will have a process in place. If positivity rates hit certain milestones, we will know what we need to do, and we will do it.

We have big plans for the future. We have achieved these great successes despite adversity. I know this is hard work. The past two years, especially, have required commitment, dedication, and resilience. It has been challenging, exhausting, and emotionally taxing. So let me say to everyone watching and listening today, to all of our students, faculty, and staff: Thank you. Thank you for your commitment to our community. Thank you for your commitment to the power of education. Thank you for continuing to advance our mission of *Opportunitas*.

To the students who kept up in your studies, who adapted when we had to pivot modalities, who accepted necessary limits on your activities, who stuck to it and stayed on track – thank you.

To the faculty members who have become expert at online education, who continued to support, counsel, and mentor, who dealt with personal challenges but continued to deliver for our students – thank you.

To our faculty councils, and especially to the faculty council leadership, who have shouldered new responsibilities and adapted to new realities as we work together to govern the University – thank you.

To the deans and vice presidents who have managed through unpredictability, overseen pivots and changes, who never lost sight of our mission and goals – thank you.

To our Board of Trustees, to our dedicated alumni and donors – thank you.

