



State of the University

Spring 2019

Taking stock of the accomplishments of 2018, and charting the opportunities that remain ahead through July 31, 2019, has proven to be a complicated exercise for me. While I take enormous pride in the success we have achieved together, ending my tenure as president of this great university—this wonderful community—will be a significant personal transition.

This is an exciting time at Monmouth, and I have every confidence that our next president, Dr. Patrick Leahy, will enjoy the same support that has been essential to achieving the milestones of the last year. I also know that we will continue to work together to prepare the University for the next chapter in its remarkable growth, maturation, and success.

Perhaps there is no greater benchmark for the progress we have already made than in the caliber of students who challenge us to constantly improve the quality of the comprehensive educational experience we deliver. Very simply, our students are better prepared, more ambitious, and more competitive than ever.





Former New Jersey Governor Richard Codey opens the Center for Active Citizenship with President Grey Dimenna on April 20, 2018.

Enhancing Academic Excellence

The academic quality of the incoming freshman class was the highest in the University's history, boasting an average high school GPA of 3.42 and an average SAT score of 1134. At the same time, we enrolled the highest percentage (26.3%) of out-of-state students, and welcomed the third-highest percentage (27.4%) of racially and ethnically diverse students in Monmouth's history.

This promising cohort has continued its success, with a record 416 freshmen eligible to join Phi Eta Sigma, the national first year scholastic honor society, by having a GPA of 3.5 or higher at the end of the fall 2018 semester. These rising marks for incoming students are also mirrored by record increases in the four-year graduation rate of 61.1 percent, the highest in the University's history; and a six-year graduation rate that is higher than the national average, at 69.3 percent.

At the same time, our robust retention efforts, as part of the University's five-year retention plan led by a cross-functional team, include a skills enhancement program for academically at-risk students to engage in group activities designed to bolster their academic and social coping skills, as well as foster personal growth. Graduation and retention data show the impact

of this investment of resources. In our most recent academic year, 80.6 percent of first-time, full-time freshmen returned for their second year, a notable improvement over 78.6 percent the previous year.

Academic Programs & Initiatives

In April, we launched the Center for Active Citizenship, a strategic initiative that emerged from the department of Political Science and Sociology. Former New Jersey Governor Richard Codey, who served as Monmouth's Public Servant in Residence during the 2017-2018 academic year, was on hand to help celebrate the occasion.

In addition to dedicated space in Samuel E. and Mollie Bey Hall, formal organization of the center has allowed increased funding for Monmouth's successful academic teams, including the Debate Team, Model UN Team, and the Mock Trial Team.

At the graduate level, Monmouth has received approvals to offer two new programs beginning in summer and fall 2019— a Master of Science in Athletic Training and a Master of Fine Arts (MFA) in Creative Writing. The MFA will become Monmouth University's third terminal degree program, following the Doctor of Nursing Practice and the Doctor of Education programs. In January

of 2020, we will begin offering an online post-professional doctorate in Occupational Therapy, with plans for an entry-level doctoral program in Occupational Therapy in 2021. Together, these programs will significantly broaden the scope of advanced academic opportunities at Monmouth.

Making room for these new programs has meant expanding our Graduate Center in West Long Branch to 56,700 square feet. The graduate facility is also home to our newest Center of Distinction, the Institute for Health and Wellness (IHW), which welcomed its inaugural director, Dr. Belinda Anderson, in September following a national search.

With nearly half of our academic offerings directly related to the health professions, Monmouth University is uniquely positioned through the IHW to partner with hospital systems and other healthcare organizations to advance and amplify initiatives that will positively impact the health and well-being of our region.

A new state-of-the-art Simulation Laboratory, created in partnership with Monmouth Medical Center, an affiliate of the RWJBarnabas Health system, will also strengthen our commitment to advance healthcare initiatives, including education and workforce development.

Even as we develop these new academic areas, maintaining a low student-to-faculty ratio is central to our educational mission, and keeping pace with our new graduate programs has not changed our commitment to nurture students through close faculty connections. Accordingly, we have also invested in hiring new faculty to provide meaningful educational opportunities and foster post-graduate success.

In the last year we have increased our faculty by 1.3 percent, with a concomitant increase of minority faculty by 14.2 percent. This intentional focus on diversity reflects our mission, “to educate and prepare students to realize their potential as leaders and to become engaged citizens in a diverse and increasingly interdependent world.”

Academic Milestones

Professor Randall Abate was selected in September as the first Rechnitz Family Endowed Chair in Marine & Environmental Law and Policy. The newly established interdisciplinary chair was endowed through a gift from close friends of the University, Joan Rechnitz '84 '12HN and Dr. Robert Rechnitz, a professor emeritus of English at Monmouth.

Their generous support previously funded Joan and Robert Rechnitz Hall, home to the DiMattio Gallery and the Department of Art and Design, and the initial \$3 million gift that resulted in the successful \$5 million challenge grant fundraising campaign in 2014 to support the UCI's Marine Science and Policy Initiative.

Abate, an internationally recognized environmental law scholar, conducts research and teaches courses on environmental, climate change, marine and coastal, animal, and constitutional law and policy. He joins the faculty as a tenured professor in the Political Science and Sociology Department while also being affiliated with the UCI.



Katherine Parkin, Rekha Datta, and Johanna Foster

In September, three exceptional faculty members were appointed to existing endowed chairs within the Wayne D. McMurray School of Humanities and Social Sciences with Dr. Katherine Parkin assuming the Jules Plangere Chair in American Social History; Dr. Rekha Datta being appointed as the Freed Chair in Social Sciences; and Dr. Johanna Foster becoming the Helen Bennett McMurray Professor in Social Ethics.



In December, Dr. Nancy Mezey, professor of sociology and former associate dean within the Wayne D. McMurray School of Humanities and Social Sciences, was named the new dean of the Honors School.

The School of Social Work, in partnership with the Division of Student Life, received a second \$300,000 Garrett Lee Smith grant focused on suicide prevention over a three-year period. Only seven percent of universities who apply for this prestigious grant a second time receive it. The school is also celebrating the 20th anniversary of its nationally ranked Master of Social Work program. Long recognized as an outstanding graduate program by *U.S. News & World Report*, the program continues to provide innovative hands-on curricula advancing human rights and social justice.

Continuing our efforts to bring thought leaders to campus, John Dean, former White House Counsel for President Richard Nixon, was the keynote speaker in October for the H.R. Young and Stephen B. Siegel Endowed Lecture series. Dean brought history to life for a generation of students unfamiliar with the Watergate scandal that shook our nation more than 40 years ago.

At left:

Dr. Michelle Scott, associate professor and director of the SRF Suicide Prevention Research and Training Project in the School of Social Work at Monmouth.

Below:

Dr. Ruha Benjamin, associate professor of African American Studies at Princeton University, was the keynote speaker in the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Distinguished Speaker in Social Justice Series



We also welcomed Dr. Ruha Benjamin, associate professor of African American Studies at Princeton University, as the inaugural speaker in the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Distinguished Speaker in Social Justice Series on Founders' Day. Earlier in the year we also hosted Susan Fowler, who exposed sexism and harassment at technology pioneer Uber with a presentation on sexual harassment in Silicon Valley. Our Visiting Writers Series also provides an outstanding platform to meet distinguished authors in an intimate setting. Man Booker Prize-winning novelist Marlon James was just one of the series' noteworthy guests.

Comprehensive Student Success

As president I have made student success the guiding principle for decisions that affect Monmouth University. This commitment extends beyond academic, athletic, and career outcomes. It includes engagement with diversity, the arts, community service, and compassion for others.

At its best, Monmouth University is a safe place to explore intellectual and social boundaries while learning what it means to be informed and engaged with different perspectives. Without the basic requirements of personal safety and individual responsibility, none of the higher functions of a university education are possible.

In that context, it was with a heavy heart that I suspended Greek letter organizations on campus at the beginning of the 2018-19 academic year. Widespread safety violations, a drop in academic performance among the Greek students, and serious concerns about the need for personal accountability required serious action to avoid the tragic circumstances seen at other institutions.

Working with our Greek affiliated students throughout the fall semester, I was pleased to announce the full reinstatement of Greek Life on campus in January. Our work with the student leadership of the Greek Senate, the Interfraternity Council, Pan-Hellenic Council, and the Multi-Cultural Greek Council has enabled a concrete path forward that will effect positive

changes for the direction and culture of Greek Life on campus.

We have ample evidence that our students are capable of great compassion and exemplary service. For the last 19 years, students have participated in the annual Big Event, a day of service that is focused on helping the local community. Hundreds of students join together at more than 25 worksites including food pantries, churches, and coastal watersheds, just one part of volunteer efforts that yields thousands of hours of community service each year.

Closer to campus, last fall students organized and opened a student-run food pantry, “the Nest,” to combat a national issue, food insecurity. The effort to serve Monmouth students without a meal plan is a joint effort between the Division of Student Life and the Student Government Association (SGA). Funding for the pantry comes through support from our beverage partner Coke, Gourmet Dining, SGA funds, and the generosity of many campus donors.

Improving Campus Facilities and Resources

One of the most visible additions to campus last year was the installation of the Hawk at Brockriede Common, a massive bronze hawk sculpture that is 15 feet high, weighs in at 29,000 pounds, and features a 22-foot-long wingspan.





With a crash of the ceremonial champagne bottle, Heather Arincibia christened the R/V Heidi Lynn Sculthorpe in memory of her sister on October 8, 2018.

The impressive Hawk landed in Brockriede Common, the center circle outside the OceanFirst Bank Center, thanks to the artistry and generosity of master sculptor Brian Hanlon '88 and his wife, Michele Hanlon '90, underwritten with a generous donation from the Brockriede family, including trustee John A. Brockriede Jr. '07 '10M.

It has quickly become a natural rallying point and a source of great pride for students, student-athletes, and alumni. On sunny days, students and campus visitors are constantly snapping “selfies” with the sculpture, and the football team now touches the Hawk for luck before each home game. The new tradition seems to be working because the team won all but one home game last season.

Earlier in October, the School of Science and Urban Coast Institute (UCI) celebrated the naming of the Research Vessel Heidi Lynn Sculthorpe, a 49-foot boat that can carry 21 passengers, sleep between 6-8, and venture 20 nautical miles from shore. The vessel, which is Monmouth's largest, was named in memory of a former student and daughter of former Monmouth University Board Chair Robert B. Sculthorpe '63 '15HN.

Along with two smaller research vessels, the 18-foot Little Hawk and 27-foot Seahawk, the R/V Heidi Lynn Sculthorpe significantly increases opportunities for student-faculty research near our coastal campus. The acquisition was just one of several prominent projects, including the completion of the \$58 million renovation

At right:

In addition to his work with ESPN broadcasts at Monmouth, Senior Class President Nicholas Verzicco has served as a new student orientation leader, admissions tour guide, and two-time volunteer in the alternative break program helping families in Guatemala and Haiti.

Below:

Assistant Professor Keith Dunton and his students are tracking sharks off the coast of New Jersey in an effort to better understand how improper catch and release affects their numbers.



of the School of Science celebrated with a ribbon cutting ceremony in January, and notable progress on the Monmouth Marine and Environmental Field Station in partnership with the Borough of Rumson.

In October, we also marked the official opening of our dedicated space at the Lakehouse Recording Studio in Asbury Park. Music industry veterans joined alumni, faculty and students to celebrate the grand opening of the satellite branch of the music industry program. Students performed with Rock and Roll Hall of Fame inductee Vini “Mad Dog” Lopez, the former E Street Band drummer who played on Springsteen’s first two albums, including “Greetings from Asbury Park, N.J.”



Thanks in part to our partnership with the Bruce Springsteen Archives and Center for American Music, Monmouth hosted a screening of the Netflix Original Special “Springsteen on Broadway” in Pollak Theatre. The January event featured an in-person extended introduction by Emmy Award-winner Thom Zimny, who directed and produced the film that chronicled the breakout one-man autobiographical show.

Other recent improvements to campus include the replacement of the outdoor track, the So Sweet a Cat field hockey turf, and renovation of the sixth and final student residence building at University Bluffs, adjacent to the boardwalk and beach on Ocean Avenue in Long Branch.

Athletic Achievements

Our student-athletes continue to excel both on and off the field, earning athletic victories and academic accolades. Monmouth claimed its fourth straight Overall Commissioner’s Cup, including winning its first Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference (MAAC) Women’s Commissioner’s Cup.

Nine athletic teams recorded a grade point average above 3.40 for the fall semester, highlighted by a program-high 3.62 by women’s soccer, which was also the highest of any team in the athletics department.



The women's soccer team won its third consecutive MAAC Championship match at Hesse Field on The Great Lawn, while also earning a collective 3.62 grade point average.

Men's tennis won its third consecutive MAAC Tournament Championship while field hockey and women's soccer won MAAC Championships on the same day on campus in the fall. It was the third consecutive advancement to the NCAA Tournament for both teams.

In May, the softball team won its first MAAC Tournament Championship in program history riding a streak that included winning 24 out of 25 games. The team also advanced to the NCAA Tournament for the first time in program history.

Our perennially successful indoor and outdoor track and field teams continued their winning streak in 2018, capturing men's and women's titles in February and May of 2018—and repeated their Indoor Track & Field MAAC Championship victories in February 2019 for the fifth and sixth times respectively.

Across the entire athletic spectrum, Monmouth programs were featured on more than 60 ESPN3/ESPN+ broadcasts, most of which were produced with crews made up of Monmouth University students. Monmouth continues to serve as a model program partner for other schools in the MAAC Conference and beyond.

Among many outstanding alumni playing professionally, two recent graduates of the football program, Alex Thompson '17 and Darnell Leslie '17, broke new ground in February by playing in the Alliance of American Football league (AAF). The new eight-team league will complement the NFL during the offseason and showcase developing talent. Like all of our current athletes and Hawks in the pros, we wish them continued postgraduate success.

Recognition and Accolades

Monmouth is fortunate to have reached a number of milestones and achievements that reflect the strength of our educational outcomes. The Princeton Review has included Monmouth University in its lists of best colleges for the last 14 years, including the 2019 edition of “The Best 384 Colleges.” *U.S. News & World Report’s* annual list of “Best Colleges” has featured Monmouth as one of the top 40 schools in the ‘Regional Universities North’ category for five straight years.

In the 2018 edition, we moved 10 places higher on the list to 28, and maintained the improved ranking in the 2019 edition. For some measure of our rapid progress as a university, Monmouth was ranked at 41, and 40 in 2009 and 2008, respectively.

For a fourth consecutive year, Monmouth University landed on MONEY Magazine’s list of “Best Colleges for Your Money,” and the Monmouth University Polling Institute received an A+ rating from the polling website FiveThirtyEight.com in 2018, one of a handful of national organizations to receive the top marks.

Together We Can: The Campaign for Scholarship

In October I announced the public launch of an ambitious campaign, Together We Can: The Campaign for Scholarship, to raise \$15 million in private funding for student scholarships by June 30, 2019. The scholarship campaign, which has engaged enthusiastic volunteers from every school, is spearheaded by Jonathan Meer, who joined Monmouth as vice president for University Advancement in March 2018. Meer has been aided in the effort by campaign co-chairs Valerie Montecalvo and Carol Stillwell, both of whom are trustees and scholarship benefactors.

I am pleased to report that by the end of February the campaign had reached 86 percent of its goal with \$12.89 million in gifts and pledges committed to scholarship funding. While this is an important milestone—particularly because \$12

million was the original target goal suggested by our campaign consultant—we still have several million left to raise before we can declare victory in the effort.

Achieving success will enhance our ability to continue to attract highly qualified students from economically, geographically, and culturally diverse backgrounds. Currently, 30 percent of Monmouth students qualify for need-based, federally funded financial aid. In the most recent academic year, more than \$66 million in institutional scholarship assistance was awarded. That represents an 11 percent increase from the prior year and a 99 percent jump from a decade ago, which is ultimately an unsustainable financial model.



Raising funds for student scholarships has been the focus of *Together We Can: The Campaign for Scholarship*.

While our endowment has more than doubled from \$41 million as of June 30, 2009, to nearly \$92 million as of December 31, 2018, it is still insufficient to meet the financial needs of deserving students. Using the “five percent spending rule”, an endowment of \$92 million will yield \$4.6 million—which can quickly be stretched thin to support a broad range of operating needs including campus improvements, endowed faculty chairs, and tuition assistance in the form of merit-and need-based scholarship aid.



Sand sculpture commissioned for Fourth of July celebrations in Long Branch.

Founded in the depths of the Great Depression, Monmouth has always been resilient. Our students, our faculty, and our administrators have risen to numerous challenges over the course of our history.

There is no question that allocating institutional resources to provide our students with the resources they need for student success and post-college employment correlates closely with issues of affordability and access. As an institution with a budget that is 94 percent dependent upon tuition-related revenue, each investment in people, programs, facilities, and support is weighed carefully.

Driven in large part by the strong performance of the scholarship campaign, overall fundraising for the University in 2018 was \$13.9 million in gifts and pledges, an increase of more than 50 percent over 2017.

This is a significant vote of confidence in the value of the highly personalized private education that Monmouth offers, our broader mission to nurture healthcare and the arts in our region, and our ambitious goals for the future of the University.

Looking Ahead

As I complete the last months of my term as president, I am hopeful that my focus on comprehensive student outcomes will provide a solid foundation for Monmouth's 10th president, Dr. Patrick Leahy, as he accepts the charge to move our great University on to greater heights.

Dr. Leahy emerged as the Board's unanimous choice from a diverse pool of more than 100 highly accomplished leaders in the nationwide search. I am grateful to immediate past Board Chair and Search Chair Henry Mercer, III '87 '17HN and all 17 members of the presidential search committee, including students, faculty, administrators, and trustees—many of whom are alumni—who gave generously of their time.

I look forward to working with President-elect Leahy to facilitate a productive transition and to ensure that we don't miss a beat in what continues to be a very competitive landscape. He is familiar with the serious challenges facing higher education, and understands that Monmouth is not immune from demographic and economic forces that will shape the future of our University.

In addition to shrinking pools of high school students, significantly increased competition for transfer, graduate, and international students, together with a healthy fear of crushing student debt, the benefits of a liberal arts-based education are under greater scrutiny than ever.

While we enrolled our best class ever, it cost much more in institutional resources to do so, significantly raising our tuition discount rate, the amount of scholarships and need-based financial aid we provide to students on an annual basis. It is a financial model that is not sustainable over the long term. Even small declines in our enrollment levels over the next few years will have the potential to ripple across our overall budget and create revenue shortfalls.

Founded in the depths of the Great Depression, Monmouth has always been resilient. Our students, our faculty, and our administrators have risen to numerous challenges over the course of our history. Along the way we have emerged as a stronger university, with renewed focus on fulfilling our educational mission.

It is an honor and a privilege to serve as president, and I am deeply appreciative of our generous, talented, and loyal alumni and friends who support



Monmouth by serving on our boards, mentoring students, giving back through financial support, and sharing valuable insight.

I am grateful to the faculty and staff who make it possible for our students to discover, learn, and grow. Our students remain a source of continuing amazement and delight for me, and I will strive to carry their incredible energy and optimism with me through the end of my tenure as president, and into the adventures that await.

Sincerely,

Grey J. Dimenna, Esq.
President



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