

Special Public Virtual Meeting of the  
Bloomsburg University Council of Trustees

February 25, 2022

12:30 pm

Good afternoon. My name is Mary Jane Bowes and I serve as the chair of the Council of Trustees of Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania, a member of the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education.

This is a special meeting called by the trustees to discuss one issue. As a public body, the Council is subject to the Sunshine Act, which is a law that was passed to insure transparency in the deliberations of public bodies. An issue has come before us which we consider to be of such importance that we wanted to public to hear what we had to say. We called this special meeting quickly due to time constraints as a result of the recently scheduled Board of Governor's meeting next week where they will address the northeast integration naming.

As stated in the publication of the agenda item on Bloomsburg's website, the purpose of the meeting today is to solicit input from the Council of Trustees in order to provide feedback to the PASSHE Board of Governors about a potential change of the legal name of Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania for purposes of the newly-integrated institution.

Now, I want to be clear that the Bloomsburg University Council of Trustees has **NO AUTHORITY TO MAKE SUCH A DECISION**. The Council of Trustees is an advisory board with **LIMITED** areas of authority. The decision to change the legal name of a university is not one of them. Only the Board of Governors can do that.

The Board of Governors administers the State System of which Bloomsburg University is a member. However, we trustees have been appointed by the Governor of Pennsylvania to provide our best advice about the university, and that is what we have always faithfully tried to do the best of our abilities. Trustee oversight focuses on the university mission and the consistency and effectiveness with which it is carried out; the university's financing, with special attention to long-range viability; the preservation and development of the institution's facilities; and the relationships among the university and its various constituencies, including the community and the public. We believe that the potential change of the legal name of the university implicates all of these concerns.

Moreover, we have been asked by the president and the Chancellor for our input. And that is what this meeting is about.

As you know, Bloomsburg is being integrated with Lock Haven University and Mansfield University. This process has been a long and complicated one, made more difficult by a global pandemic. But everyone involved in the integration has worked hard see how three universities can become one. Our administrators, faculty, students, fellow trustees, union representatives, and alumni have all come together over countless hours to merge and unite the three schools. Bloomsburg's president, Dr. Bashar Hanna, serves as interim president of Lock Haven and Mansfield and has expended personal and professional superhuman effort to manage the integration and to smooth the bumps along the road. Dr. Dan Greenstein, Chancellor of the State System has overseen the entirety of the process.

The new triad will result in three universities becoming a single accredited institution, and will utilize the accreditation of Bloomsburg University. As a result of using Bloomsburg's accreditation, Bloomsburg is the surviving institution.

One issue that has arisen as a result of the integration is what to name the newly-combined institution. After a series of meetings with the executive committees of the three university's councils of trustees, last week a recommendation was made that the legal name of Bloomsburg University be changed. That recommendation was made to the Chancellor, who will make a recommendation to the Board of Governors next week.

I want to make clear that we were informed that colloquial **references to Bloomsburg would remain** on the signage, sports team, swag and in general usage. Maybe to the outside world, little would change. But the legal name would no longer be Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania. Since we are charged with a fiduciary duty to ensure that we are providing the best advice possible on the best interests of the university, we have called this meeting.

In my view, the name Bloomsburg University should continue to appear in the legal name of the university. This is not a new position and should not surprise any parties involved in this process.

We have consistently called for the retention of the name of Bloomsburg from the earliest integration discussions. In letters to Dr. Greenstein in August and November of 2020, we clearly articulated as a firm guardrail the need to retain the name of Bloomsburg University with regard to any future integrated entity before we agreed to willingly participate in the integration. The reasons are myriad and readily apparent.

Since 1867, Bloomsburg has been a part of the rich history of higher education in Pennsylvania. From its earliest beginnings as **Bloomsburg Literary Institute** to **Bloomsburg State Normal School** to **Bloomsburg State Teachers College** to **Bloomsburg College** to **Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania**, Bloomsburg has always proudly been part of the name.

Over the many years of its existence, Bloomsburg University has demonstrated the ability to operate in a manner that delivers high quality, student-centric, and affordable education. Notably, one third of the University's student body is first generation college students.

We have been fortunate to distinguish ourselves and maintain fiscal stability even in the midst of significant funding challenges in the past decade. Our brand strength is the key to our success in both enrollment and fundraising. Our enrollment is almost three times that of Lock Haven and over four times that of Mansfield, and our alumni number more than double those of the other two entities. The size of our endowment is more than four times that of the others at \$60M.

It is apparent that Bloomsburg, which has the largest footprint on the Pennsylvania population and beyond, warrants the continued vitality of a historically successful brand and provides the greatest probability for regional enrollment growth at all three sites. The name "Bloomsburg" adds value to all three entities due to its strong reputation for academic excellence. It is in the best interests of the entire State System to give the new entity the strongest possible chance at success by leveraging the name of Bloomsburg.

Bloomsburg has worked hard to effectively situate itself amid many unknowns, including a global pandemic, changing demographics, and a faltering economy. A worst-case scenario would be to have this integration weaken – rather than lift up – Bloomsburg University, each partner institution, and the entire System.

While we have been told that the legal name would not be used publicly, we have not received any written assurances, legal opinions, or criteria about how it may ultimately be used. However, during this entire process, folks have continually reached for a word to describe the new institution: the triad, the northeast integration, the newly-integrated institution. It calls out for a name for ease of reference, and undoubtedly the new legal name will be used by the state system and the Board of Governors. It will undoubtedly enter the PASSHE lexicon. And that name should be Bloomsburg University, or a version of it.

Adding a new name to the diplomas of these three schools brings no additional value to those degrees. But adding Bloomsburg University to the diplomas of our sister institutions, which will each proudly bear its own name, will infuse those diplomas with the high reputation and regard that is undeniably inspired by the Bloomsburg name. It makes us stronger to unite under the Bloomsburg mantle. Introducing an unknown and meaningless name into the equation dilutes all of our brands.

In an effort to persuade us to embrace a new name, we have been told that the continued use of Bloomsburg will be negatively viewed by the NCAA and would cause disruption with the sports programming, but nothing has been confirmed, nor have alternative scenarios been explored. No balancing of the cost versus benefits has been performed. Suppositions and innuendo should not serve as a basis for such an impactful decision.

The question of what would appear on things like applications, university certifications, the website, search engine results, transcripts or a Bloomsburg University diploma also remains ambiguous and uncertain. A legal name change of a public university is a significant event in the life of an institution and should only occur after appropriate thought and consideration of all of the ramifications that may flow from it.

A possible new name presented to us makes no reference to Bloomsburg, has not been tested, and closely resembles other institutions.

Some of these above concerns could possibly be addressed over time. But without the benefit of additional information and detailed study as to the impact of any such decision, I cannot not recommend a name change that does not reference Bloomsburg University.

In conclusion, after hearing the comments from the other trustees, it is the considered opinion of eight of the nine trustees present (Trustee Wetzel was absent but forwarded separate remarks received after the meeting), that the name Bloomsburg University not be changed, or that some version of it becomes the name of the newly integrated institution.

We thank everyone in attendance today, especially Dr. Hanna, and appreciate the efforts of the Bloomsburg University personnel who made this virtual meeting possible.

These remarks and those of other trustees will be forwarded to the Chancellor and the Board of Governors for their consideration. Thank you.

Remarks by Trustee Nancy Vasta:

This is trustee Vasta and I will be brief. I support the comments and recommendations made by our Chair, Judge Bowes.

Based on my experience in Marketing and Branding, I believe the integrated entity will need to be referenced publicly and the entity name will be visible. Given this, I recommend leveraging the existing, strongest brand - Bloomsburg University.

Remarks by Trustee Amy Brayford:

I recognize the need for a legal entity. I strongly prefer Bloomsburg University is part of that name. If not I would like written guidelines for future use of the Bloomsburg University name and brand.

Remarks by Trustee Duane Greenly:

Chairman Bowes, you captured in your opening remarks many of my thoughts on this subject. Just a few extra thoughts. The choice of the name of our triad is a major and important decision and should not be made lightly and without deep thought. Anyone who characterizes this decision as a minor or nonevent, I think is not being honest.

The ramifications of the name change on enrollment, retention, fundraising, etc. could be very damaging. There is no perfect answer and not everybody will be happy with the final decision, but I don't think that means we throw out all three names and destroy years and years of brand equity.

We spent money, at the request of leadership, to hire an independent third-party consultant firm to test several names and Bloomsburg did come out as the clear winner on brand equity and awareness.

I'm sure others have different opinions but I believe the best and safest approach is to lead with the strongest brand and work hard to simultaneously raise the brand awareness and equity of the two other universities. They deserve that and all our past alumni and current students deserve that. Let's not rush into a bad decision that we won't be able to go back on but one that we can always revisit in the future.

It is not a foregone conclusion that the triad schools are necessarily going to attract more students, it just as easily could turn off people and decrease enrollments, reduce fundraising, etc. at these three schools. Let's not just devalue all three brands before we understand the ramifications of doing just that. I believe, whatever the name ends up being, for now the recommended name needs to include and lead with the word Bloomsburg!

Thank you, chairman Bowes for the opportunity to express my views in this open forum.

Remarks by Trustee Brian O'Donnell:

Trustee O'Donnell supports Trustees Bowes statement.

Remarks by Trustee Ed Edwards:

Trustee Edwards concurs and supports the statement. Also stated that the name change makes him uncomfortable and fears the BU brand will be lost. He recommends these comments be delivered to the BOG.

Remarks by Trustee Julia Burcin:

I chose to attend Bloomsburg University because of the culture that comes with it. It is important to me that when I am an alumni, Bloomsburg University is continuing to evolve and grow. Bloomsburg's brand is well known across

the state and the region. In addition, our alumni body is large and increasing. A legal name change runs a risk of uncertainty with current and future students. In conclusion, I agree with Judge Bowes' thoughts and I believe the Bloomsburg name matters.

Remarks by Trustee Dan Klingerman:

Trustee Klingerman stated he agrees 100% with our position and prefers to slow the process in order to make a proper decision. Not using Bloomsburg in the name will adversely affect the university.

Remarks by Trustee Ray Zaborney:

Trustee Zaborney stated he understands the position of all but that the name will have no effect short term and that we have local control over the issues of concern. He respectfully disagrees and looks forward to the resolution. Additional remarks in attached letter.

Remarks by Trustee John Wetzel:

See attached letter.



February 25, 2022

Dear President Bowes,

As you know I have been a steadfast supporter of the integration of Bloomsburg along with Lock Haven and Mansfield. I believe that this approach is not only mandatory to save our system but offers Bloomsburg an amazing opportunity to grow and thrive.

Throughout this process we have been faced with important markers to earn this council's support. While I won't go into great detail, they were sufficient funding from the state, retirement of debt at Mansfield, Bloomsburg senior staff leading this effort, and our ability to manage our campuses and maintain our identity. I believe that despite some bumpy roads, both President Hanna and Chancellor Greenstein have kept their word to our council, and we have had victories on each point.

I think it is a mistake for this council to treat the naming of the triad as anything other than a technical matter in which we must engage to reap some of the benefits of the structure without risking our promises to each campus – including allowing each school to maintain their identity for athletics.

We have been given assurances by the Chancellor and President Hanna that we would be able to maintain Bloomsburg University's identity on diplomas, on campus, on transcripts, with alumni, through our foundation, and most importantly in all our marketing efforts. That is what matters and that is what I fought alongside all of you for during this integration.

Bloomsburg gave me a chance to be successful by combining affordability and opportunity. As a member of this council, it's my intention to focus relentlessly on what is in the best interest of the students. I believe that the Chancellor's proposed name means very little give all that we have protected on behalf of these students.

Sincerely,

A large, bold, black handwritten signature, likely of Ray Zaborney, consisting of several overlapping loops and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Ray Zaborney



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2151 LINGLESTOWN ROAD | SUITE 300  
HARRISBURG, PA 17110

Bloomsburg University  
400 E 2<sup>nd</sup> Street  
Bloomsburg, PA 17815

Dear Husky Nation,

I fully support the integration of Bloomsburg University with our sister institutions at Lock Haven and Mansfield. I believe this integration is essential to the survival of the PA State System of Higher Education as an affordable option for students in PA.

Bloomsburg was perfectly situated to be the lead institution in this triad, and as such our focus must be on who best to maximize the strengths of all three campuses to both offset our individual weaknesses, but as importantly, to enable us to grow this new entity into the type of academic and intellectual leader that our commonwealth needs.

#### Assumptions:

- Current system structure with funding level insufficient
- Combining BU, LHU, MU would stabilize all 3 and allow for a reduction in administrative spend to increase student spend with flat funding
- Bloomsburg “led”
- Once stabilized, legitimate opportunity to utilize the strength of 3 campuses and locations to both deliver educational opportunities more efficiently as well as open up for strategic expansion and partnerships in the “northeast” generally

Given that we agree on the goal, focus shifts to how to achieve this and what is critical in that.

As the person who led (likely) the largest integration in PA State Government history (PA DOC combining with PA Board of Probation and Parole) which culminated in both codifying the integrated entity, but also yielded cost savings and improved outcomes, quickly establishing a joint identity while allowing the respective agencies to keep the



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important things that tether them to their history and tradition. We have clearly achieved that.

The next essential tenet of making this needed integration successful is leadership.

Of all the components of this transition, I am most confident that our (combined) leadership team has the skill set and strategy to make this successful. Dr. Hanna has and continues to compile a team of committed professionals who are operationalizing this change as we speak.

There are likely some reasonable concerns about Bloomsburg's Council of Trustees having the ability to function as a Council of Trustees over the triad, given some of the comments and actions over the process. Bloomsburg is not a place that is divisive and disparaging. I apologize if anyone comes away from this with that impression. Conversely "Bloom" is the exact opposite of that. And as a member of the board, I look forward to taking a significant role in working through a badly needed process of conciliation with our fellow trustees from our sister schools. Our outcomes are inextricably linked, and I look forward to working with our colleagues to make this successful.

To the Board of Governors- please see me as a partner in helping this triad be successful in any way. I also want to thank you for your vision and courage in beginning to make the system more efficient, reducing moneys spent anywhere other than directly on students. I share in your belief that this is the only path to ensure that this system, that has given so many of us an opportunity, remains viable and relevant. As Deming reminds us, **it is not necessary to change. Survival is not mandatory.**

I sincerely appreciate Chancellor Greenstein's vision and persistence in marshalling this historic undertaking through 4 legislative caucuses, the governor's office, 3 councils of trustees and a board of governors. Impossible to please all, difficult to land on a solution that pleases all, but it is possible to land on a solution that, once the emotion dissipates, most can objectively agree positions us in the right place. I believe we achieved that.



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On a personal level, I'm a kid who was given up at birth, in poverty and into the foster care system. Bloomsburg was as critical to anything I've been able to achieve as any other factor. The expanded opportunities afforded kids like me - whose trajectory was far different than many folks around the table, this smart compromise is NOTHING comparatively. I had one offer - it was Bloomsburg.

Sincerely,

John Wetzel  
Former Secretary of Corrections  
CEO, Phronema Justice Strategies, LLC

CC: Dr. Bashar Hanna, President, Bloomsburg University  
Dr. Daniel Greenstein, Chancellor, Pennsylvania's State System of Higher Education  
Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education Board of Governors  
Governor Tom Wolf  
Ms. Bobbi J. Kilmer, Chair, Mansfield Council of Trustees  
Mr. Daniel Elby, Chair, Lock Haven Council of Trustees