



Town Hall Meeting Remarks

President Christopher M. Reber
June 30, 2026

Good afternoon, and thanks so much for being here today!

I want to thank Ashley Frederick, Lorelee Isbell, and others for arranging this Town Hall Meeting. I also thank Ashley for coordinating many upcoming meetings with trustees, faculty, staff, students, and community members. I will be conducting a listening tour throughout the university and community in the coming weeks and months and I'm very much looking forward to getting to know all of you!

And I thank many of you who have sent me notes, background information, and those who have already met with me to support my transition here. It has been enormously helpful and exhilarating!

Allow me to begin by offering special thanks to Board of Trustees Chair Mike Fiaschetti and all our talented, dedicated, and visionary trustees for the honor and privilege of serving as your new president. I am exceedingly grateful for the trustees' and university community's trust, guidance, advocacy, and support. I look forward to a continued exceptional working relationship between the president, the trustees, and all university and community members.

In preparing to join you, I have been reading about the great work you all do!

- Your many exceptional STEM focused certificate, bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degree programs that are distinctive nationally and internationally;
- The inspirational high impact and experiential learning opportunities and experiences you provide students and the community, many of which are embedded into curricula;
- Your phenomenal, state-of-the-art facilities that promote high impact learning;

- Exemplary opportunities you provide for the upward socioeconomic mobility of Harrisburg University students;
- Your strong commitment to institutional engagement and excellence embracing equity and inclusion;
- Your commitment to – and continuous improvement around – student success, credential completion, and life-changing opportunities for all we serve;
- Your strong and inspirational partnerships across the region, Commonwealth, nation and beyond that enable outcomes far greater than the sum of their parts;
- Myriad events on the campus and in the community that engage thousands of citizens in the university and its programs, contributing to community enrichment and quality of life;
- Student centeredness throughout the university's communities, and I could go on and on!

This is a great university – an inspirational university – and I am honored and thrilled to be joining you as your president! I'll work very hard to earn your trust and support continuous improvement around our shared goals and dreams.

Harrisburg University's Mission and Value Proposition

Harrisburg University of Science and Technology has a distinctive and inspirational mission and value proposition that I feel energized to support, champion, and promote in the months and years ahead.

- A small, personally engaging, private but affordable, student-centered university with powerful and critically important programs that deeply engage students and serve thousands more students and citizens in high schools, and through Professional and Workforce Development courses, programs, and micro-credentials.
- A nearly open access mission with many first-generation students whose lives are transformed in ways that positively impact their families, schools, and workplaces – with outcomes benefitting diverse communities across the region, Commonwealth, nation, and the world. The outcomes ripple across generations, promoting socioeconomic mobility, and career and economic development at all levels.

My Philosophy of Leadership

During my career, I have experienced a good number of leadership transitions, and I appreciate how important and impactful this is for everyone. I also recognize that the past several years have not been easy. Like many institutions across higher education, Harrisburg University has faced challenges, uncertainty, difficult decisions, and significant change. I know those experiences affect people differently, and I want you to know that I appreciate the resilience, commitment, and professionalism that have brought the university to this moment.

As I come on board, I am committed to collaborating with all of you to bring increasing stability, promote thoughtful planning for the future, and position the university to grow and thrive in the years to come. I thought it might be helpful to comment briefly today on my philosophy of leadership.

As I discussed with some of you during my interviews, I aspire to be what some refer to as a servant leader. Servant leadership is a philosophy whereby a leader's primary goal is to serve and empower those they lead and support, rather than exercise control. Servant leaders focus on the growth, well-being, and success of their employees, ultimately fostering higher trust and engagement. Servant leaders understand they are entrusted to lead and support an organization at a specific moment in its history and trajectory, and view their role as serving all in the organization at that moment in time by helping people define and achieve goals and dreams that reflect shared values and promote continuous improvement.

I will assess my own effectiveness by how the HU family – all of you – feel I am supporting the collective good of our university and its people in service of our mission. I want to support our university communities' efforts and successes and serve all members of our university in every way I can.

I believe in transparency and inclusion. I will share with you everything I can about how I am attempting to support the university including the many challenges and opportunities; and I will encourage all of us to contribute to university-wide conversations and sharing of ideas for addressing challenges, seizing opportunities, and advancing our collective goals and interests.

I will work hard to earn your trust. I encourage all of us to be open and honest, and to feel comfortable disagreeing with one another with respect and civility. Diversity of thought and perspectives contributes to the strongest results.

I believe in effective and meaningful shared governance. I will promote respect and trust among all our constituencies to ensure the very best outcomes and climate for our students, employees, and community. I believe in a campus culture that values everyone's ideas and celebrates the contributions of every member of our community. I believe every person matters

and everyone's perspectives should be heard and valued. And, to the fullest extent possible, everyone's contributions to educational excellence and service should be celebrated!

Integrity and Student Centeredness

There must be integrity in everything we do, everything we advocate, and everything we stand for.

Very importantly, I believe **student centeredness** is at the heart of all we do: our students' success is our university's success, and we are partners with our students on their educational journeys. This is our central common value and goal: ensuring student success and lifechanging opportunities for our students, their families, our community and beyond in service of our mission.

We have so many strengths to build on thanks to the strong leadership of President Dave Schankweiler, the trustees, all faculty and staff, our students, our partners and donors, and to the exceedingly good work of others on the campus and in the community over the past quarter century. Building on the exemplary accomplishments of this university community in support of students, the region and beyond, we can now move to the next level of stellar outcomes for our students and university.

Addressing Challenges and Building on Opportunities

In the short term, we also have many challenges, primarily attributable to forces outside our control:

- Increased challenges associated with the recruitment and retention of our students;
- Particular challenges of our many international students and the effects of immigration policies, executive orders, duration of stay changes, and others;
- The related need and desire to grow our domestic enrollment and, specifically, local and regional enrollment in service of our mission and community;
- Challenges and opportunities to build an increasingly cohesive, trusting, and caring university community that lives and breathes a commitment to shared governance and mutual respect among all our people;
- And a need to continually expand partnerships and investment in the university in order to manage our destiny and ensure continuous improvement around student access, achievement, and success.

We will be open in discussing these challenges, and – working together and considering good ideas throughout the university – we will address all challenges while maintaining our commitment to meeting the needs of our students, our community, and all our constituents.

Full Engagement in the University and Community

Harrisburg University of Science and Technology has been a forward-thinking, entrepreneurial institution. As your president, I will become fully engaged on campus, and also fully engaged in the community and beyond. I will seek opportunities for leadership and support of what the Aspen Institute calls “collective impact” – addressing high priority community needs in ways that are mutually beneficial.

I will develop relationships that build trust in the community and enable me to be a tireless champion for the university, including its contributions to an increasingly educated citizenry; community and Commonwealth workforce and economic development; enhanced quality of life; and bringing visibility to the university’s outcomes, transformative opportunities, and needs.

I will seek growing opportunities to consider and develop partnerships that lead to win-win outcomes – partnerships that deliver outcomes far greater than the sum of their parts.

While there are things we can’t control, we have considerable ability to control two essential things that will lead to sustained growth in the university’s financial health and future investment in myriad opportunities.

The First is Growth of University Enrollment – Everyone’s Priority.

Every member of our university community contributes to student recruitment, retention, and success through the quality of the experiences we provide. Working closely with Vice President John Champoli, his team, and others across the university, I will support efforts to continue to develop, grow and refine a culture that utilizes strategic enrollment management principles to achieve recruitment and retention goals, and I want to emphasize the importance of **retention**.

Not only will we focus on bringing new students through our front doors. Equally important, we must focus on keeping our current students enrolled and engaged, and supporting them through degree completion, our exit doors, and on to transformative future pathways.

Experiential learning and high impact practices are of course central to student engagement, retention, and success. And we must be laser focused on the use of data and best practice to inform the removal of barriers that keep our students from completing their programs and

achieving their goals, utilizing practices that are student centered including transfer into and out of Harrisburg University of Science and Technology. The transfer process must at all times be student centered.

Second, We Will Seek and Acquire Increasing Levels of Investment in Harrisburg University.

Under Vice President Pam Lambert's leadership and with the full support of her colleagues, the Trustee Philanthropy Committee, and beyond, we must also grow private and grant investment in HU so that, over time, the proportion of our budget funded by entities in the private, corporate, foundation and granting agency sectors increases rather than asking our students and their families to increasingly pay more.

We will establish and grow endowed funds that provide the margin of excellence for our university to advance its life-changing mission in perpetuity. A mission that ensures every student succeeds, that we serve and grow an increasingly diverse population of students including more domestic and regional students, that faculty and staff are supported including their professional development, and that the university is a full and robust partner with all parts of our community, region, Commonwealth, nation, and beyond.

The nationally distinctive educational programs and activities of Harrisburg University are, collectively, a noble and inspirational cause worthy of significant investment by donors, foundations, businesses and corporations, the Commonwealth, and other granting agencies as we engage with them and build trust.

Promoting Growth

In the short, intermediate, and long terms we can and must stabilize current challenges including, fundamentally, financial challenges, and then position the university to excel and grow in areas of shared values, dreams, and priorities. I believe *growth* should be a focus and goal in all our efforts.

- Growth in enrollment and revenue that will bring opportunities to invest in our people and the continuous improvement and excellence of the university's outcomes.
- Growth in the development of programs that address priority needs of our students and region, high-priority programs needed for the workforce that we can deliver with excellence. I look forward to supporting our faculty, deans, Provost Kevin Purcell and his team, CFO and COO Duane Maun and his colleagues, and others in support of these initiatives.

- Growth in our partnerships with other institutions to offer programming that is distinctive; that supports educational, economic and workforce development, quality of life, and student centered educational and career ladders of credentials and pathways for our students and citizens.
- Growth in our efforts to ensure the success of every student; keeping students enrolled through the completion of their degrees and achieving their goals by using data and best practice to remove barriers and promote retention. I am most impressed with the University's retention plan led by Lauren Edgell and a team of dedicated faculty and staff. In close collaboration with the Student Success staff, the Trustee Academic and Student Affairs Committee, and all faculty and staff across the university, I will support student success and retention efforts assiduously as a central priority of my presidency.

Student Engagement and High School Academies

We will promote growth in our outreach in the region and in the quality of our services to support students and the community. This includes growth in our engagement with K-12 students, and in our efforts to develop and expand dual enrollment pathways including new high-impact High School Academies serving students from multiple school districts who have common career and program interests and are inspired through dynamic on-campus learning.

Although we will miss him as he retires, the impressive engagement of over 1,800 high school students in HU courses led by Vice President John Friend and his team will grow in the years to come, an increasing point of pride for our great university and a lasting legacy of John's leadership and service. This includes new student engagement opportunities that lead to more dual enrollment high school students matriculating into the university and advancing through our undergraduate and graduate programs and career pathways.

We will also develop successful continuing pathways through growing collaborations with other post-secondary educational partners. We have a tremendous opportunity to grow our engagement with nontraditional students, including thousands and thousands of Pennsylvania adults who have earned some credits, but no credential. This is a concrete opportunity to address and balance the deepening enrollment cliff of the traditional high school student population.

We will promote growth in what all in our community do on campus – including course offerings and programming, student clubs and organizations, student activities, cultural programs and events, and community activities and meetings held in our exceptional and inspirational facilities.

And we will grow our Professional Continuing Education and Workforce Development initiatives, including distinctive and specialized training and industry recognized micro-credentials nested in academic degree program pathways.

Culture of Assessment; Program and Institutional Accreditation

We will support and grow program accreditation and other initiatives to reach increasingly higher levels of excellence inside and outside of the classroom. We are now beginning a three-year process leading to reaffirmation of our institutional accreditation with the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, a very important process that will require all university hands on deck. Nothing is more important than institutional accreditation, as it is required for us to offer Title IV federal funding including Pell and other federal financial aid so many of our students depend on. I will be working closely with HU accreditation officer Lauren Durkin, Vice President of Institutional Effectiveness Albert Sarvis, and others as we lead the university community through this deliberative process that will also be integrated into our strategic planning.

Under the capable leadership of Vice President Lorelee Isbell and her skilled colleagues, we will re-establish the brand of Harrisburg University – in this city, the region, the Commonwealth, the nation, and throughout the world. Essential in these efforts will be a culture of ongoing assessment to ensure quality and continuous improvement in everything we do.

Growth and Support of Faculty and Staff Professional Development

Equally important, we must aggressively promote the professional development of our faculty and staff. We are a people enterprise. A mentor of mine once said, “happy universities are successful universities.” Universities where people feel valued, respected, supported, and connected are more likely to succeed and thrive. Our talented faculty and staff are by far our greatest institutional asset, and over half of our budget is dedicated to faculty and staff salaries and benefits. It is vitally important we support and invest in this asset – the people who educate and support our students and serve our community.

That’s all of you! Working closely with Director of Human Resources Jen Millford, her team, and others across the university, I will support professional development opportunities in every way possible going forward.

Together, we can do more than any of us might believe possible. I pledge to do everything I can as your president to support our collective efforts to grow and excel as an institution committed to serving our students, community, the Commonwealth and beyond!

As we approach our 25th anniversary as a community of learners, there is much for which to be thankful, much to celebrate, and much more to do! Please never hesitate to share with me your thoughts, your ideas, your concerns, and let me know how I can be helpful. Feel free to stop in to see me at the office, drop me a note, give me a call, or schedule time to meet. I want to communicate and engage with all of you – the entire university community – on a regular basis: through meetings, texts, social media, e-mail, and other communication; at events, celebrations, and in the everyday life and activities of the university.

Engaging with and Supporting Harrisburg University's Inspirational Students

Very importantly, this includes students! I enjoy almost all parts of my job, but there is nothing I enjoy more than opportunities to meet students and get to know them. I look forward to hosting ongoing “Pizza with the President,” “Coffee with the President” – or whatever food or refreshment enticements we choose; opportunities to meet, hear their stories, and learn from our talented and inspirational students.

During meetings and conversations I’ve already been enjoying with many of you, I have deeply valued discussions about how to engage, support, and celebrate the contributions of everyone in ways that lead to positive outcomes for our students, community, and living and breathing our mission. Together, we want to continue to build a connected, engaged, and growth-oriented university community where employees feel valued, supported, and empowered to grow professionally and personally, and students feel loved, cared about, engaged, supported, and inspired.

I would like to hold Town Hall Meetings monthly and invite everyone to attend: students, faculty, staff, trustees, partners and members of the community. I want to be fully engaged in the life of the university, and I will always welcome invitations to participate in meetings and activities.

Vice President Lorelee Isbell has offered very exciting thoughts and ideas in this regard, and I have asked her to share some of these with you today.

And let’s take this opportunity to congratulate Lorelee, who was celebrated last week as Central Penn Business Journal 2026 Woman of Influence! Lorelee, thank you for your inspirational leadership! You make us all proud!

Lorelee Isbell Discussed a New Harrisburg University Culture and Engagement Council

Thank you, President Reber. I appreciate the recognition of the award. I am truly humbled to have been recognized in such a way.

Good afternoon, everyone. I heard Senator Greg Rothman speak last week on the “pursuit of happiness” as outlined in the Constitution. He presented four areas that he believes drive towards the pursuit of happiness.

One of those areas relates to friends. He shared a statistic that made me sad. He said that only 30% of people have a friend at work. We should be creating workplaces where people can find ways to connect and build friendships, along with engaging in meaningful work.

As I have gotten to know more people at HU, one message has consistently surfaced in conversations across the university. This message was also made evident in the engagement survey that HR conducted over the past year.

People at HU want to feel more connected. President Schankweiler did a great job moving us in that direction. President Reber is ready to continue and expand those efforts.

Now is the time we can be more intentional about how we provide you opportunities to grow professionally, build relationships, celebrate successes, and so much more.

To help support that effort, we are launching a Culture and Engagement Council, a faculty and staff-led initiative focused on strengthening connection, engagement, professional growth, and well-being across the university community.

The council is built around three pillars:

Pillar #1: Is Professional Development

and will create more opportunities for faculty and staff to learn, grow, and develop as leaders and professionals. This could include things like faculty or staff led workshops, a lunch and learn series, and perhaps even a President’s leadership academy.

Pillar #2: Is Engagement and Recognition

and will find more ways to celebrate accomplishments, strengthen relationships, and create opportunities for employees to connect across departments. The goal here is simple: to help the HU community feel valued, appreciated, and connected.

Pillar #3: Is Health and Wellness

Healthy organizations are built on healthy people. Supporting the physical, mental, and emotional well-being of our employees is of utmost importance.

We will begin by establishing a core group of representatives and then create opportunities for broader participation through subcommittees and volunteer involvement. The council's role will be to listen, generate ideas, and help turn intentions and ideas into action.

We are excited to share that the council will be co-chaired by:

- **Julie Doxsee**, Department Chair and Associate Professor of English;
- **Emily Lupi**, Assistant Director of Career Services and Employer Relations;
- and **Jen Millford/Jen Fleig** from Human Resources.

A special thank you to them for stepping up with excitement and enthusiasm.

They will convene an initial group of faculty and staff to launch the council and will expand participation over time through subcommittees aligned with the three pillars.

This isn't about launching another committee. It's about building the kind of university where people want to work, to collaborate, and to stay.

This council is about creating a stronger Harrisburg University.

A university where professional growth is encouraged.

A university where accomplishments are celebrated.

And a university that promotes well-being and a healthy work environment.

A university where you feel connected to one another.

As Dr. Reber begins his leadership journey at Harrisburg University, we can think of no better time to expand the investment in the people who make this institution special.

Over the coming weeks, we will share more information about the council, participation opportunities, and ways to contribute ideas. Stay tuned for an email on how to get involved if you are interested.

We recognize that trust is built through actions, not just announcements. This council will balance our financial constraints while creating more spaces for engagement and growth. The strongest cultures aren't built by a president, a cabinet, or a committee. They are created every day by the people who choose to encourage one another, support one another, and build something bigger than themselves.

We invite each of you to be part of that journey.

Thank you.

Embarking on a New Harrisburg University of Science and Technology Strategic Plan

Thanks so much, Lorelee! We all deeply appreciate your leadership and that of your colleagues, and I will fully support the Culture and Engagement Council!

Business owner and consultant Bill Bethel wisely said, “A successful team is a group of many hands but of one mind.” I seek everyone’s ideas for growing the university; identifying and celebrating values, dreams, hopes, and goals we all share; and resulting in a new strategic plan that is the blueprint for our future – a living, breathing plan we all own, with specific goals, timelines, accountabilities, and outcome metrics to measure our success and further engage us in ongoing refinements and additional future pathways and opportunities.

Beginning immediately, we will engage the entire university and surrounding community in the development of our new strategic plan.

Concluding Thoughts

If you take anything away from our time together today, it should be this: As your new president, I make you three commitments.

- ***First, I will listen before I lead.***
- ***Second, I will communicate openly and honestly, especially during difficult moments.***
- ***Third, I will always strive to make decisions guided by our mission, our students, and the long-term success of Harrisburg University of Science and Technology.***

Together, we will navigate opportunities and challenges in a manner that reflects our shared values, respects diverse perspectives, and strengthens our university community. And then we will build for a future of growth and investment to expand excellence and achieve transformative outcomes throughout the university.

I am honored to have the opportunity to work side by side with all of you, to celebrate our successes and work through our challenges together, and to be your tireless advocate, champion, and servant leader. On this, my first day as your new president, I offer heartfelt thanks to each of you for the honor of serving you!

With that, are there any questions I can answer or thoughts that any of you might wish to share this afternoon?

Questions, Comments, Discussion

Thank you all! Have a great day!