



WEST VIRGINIA STATE UNIVERSITY

STATE OF THE UNIVERSITY ADDRESS

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President
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Oct. 4, 2018

2018 State of the University Address:

“Good afternoon and welcome to the State of the University Address.

This is the start to another amazing Homecoming at West Virginia State University. It is wonderful to see so many Yellow Jackets return home and participate in this great tradition. This afternoon, I would like to take a few minutes to celebrate our successes over the past year. And share my perspectives on how we must take advantage of opportunities ahead as we strive to become a premier regional Research University that is recognized nationally for our quality education, innovative teaching and experiential learning.

We are honored to share all of these accomplishments with our special guests and friends, who have joined us today. Your presence speaks volumes about your support for the next generation of Yellow Jackets and West Virginia State University.

Please join me in welcoming some special guests:

- Representing United States Senator Joe Manchin, Mike Browning
- Representing United States Senator Shelley Moore Capito, Mary Elizabeth Eckerson and Todd Gunter
- Representing Office of the Governor, Dr. William White, Executive Director, Herbert Henderson Office of Minority Affairs
- Our elected officials from the West Virginia Legislature
- Interim Chancellor Carolyn Long
- Our Board of Governors
- Members of the WVSU Foundation Board
- National Alumni Association Executive Board/Leaders
- Mr. Brandon Martinez, President of the Student Government Association
- Dr. Richard Ford, Faculty Senate President
- Ms. Robin Tabor, Classified Staff Council Chair
- My cabinet and our academic deans
- Members of the Class of 1968 celebrating their 50th anniversary



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Thank you for your exemplary leadership and passion for STATE.

Also, I want to thank our students, faculty, staff, alumni, friends, and supporters for your dedication and efforts — efforts that have helped increase the quality of our brand, our growing reputation, and our rise in prominence.

And finally, please join me in acknowledging my amazing wife and our First Lady, Toinette Jenkins, as well as our first daughters, Ashley & Alicia. At West Virginia State University, our brand has never been stronger than it is today. Despite the ever changing landscape of higher education we are positioned to forge ahead and come out of these uncertain times stronger, and leading by example.

Ours has always been a commitment to access and a quality education. As a land-grant university, we embrace our commitment to educate West Virginians and are proud of our diverse and inclusive student population. Ninety percent of our students are West Virginians, and the remaining composition comes from 23 different states, to include the District of Columbia and 19 international countries. Throughout our history, our doors have always been open to all who sought a quality education, upward mobility and better quality of life – and we will never abandon these core values, the citizens of this great state, and all students from around the world who entrust us with their educational development.

The students who attend WVSU are incredible and it is because of them - I have often stated that size nor location of our university will ever dictate our ability to compete or be successful at the highest levels. Our education has helped develop students and provide them the intellectual fortitude and self-confidence to excel in any arena they enter.

This past year, our students have gone on to medical school, law school, and graduate programs, others completed internships at the US Capitol and the West Virginia State Capitol, gone on to serve their country, and many more have entered their respective careers and began the work of helping West Virginia and our nation climb. For example, N3 a global integrated sales and marketing implementation firm recently established an office in Charleston. I am pleased to say that the majority of N3's workforce is made up of Yellow Jackets.

As the Hometown University, we are committed to our community. That's why in April more than 350 Yellow Jackets (the largest number ever) volunteered at over 30 businesses, schools, and neighborhoods, across Kanawha, Putnam and surrounding counties in a day of giving back. Our sixth annual Cares Day – was a tremendous success because of our students, staff and faculty.

As a national leader in STEM, we continue to garner recognition that sets us apart from our peers. This year, thanks to the leadership of Dr. Michael Fultz and our student chapter of the American Chemical Society (ACS) we received the 2018 Inspiring Programs in STEM Award – as the only college or university representing the Mountain state, West Virginia State University



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accepted its national award alongside other notable institutions of higher learning such as Harvard, Auburn, LSU, University of Michigan, Rice University, Columbia, and the University of Texas at Austin, to name a few.

West Virginia State University senior Edgar Lopez-Torres, was one of 63 students from throughout the nation selected as a 2018 HBCU Competitive Scholars by the White House. In the spring, he was also one of 15 undergraduate students in the world to receive the Student Leadership Award from the American Chemical Society.

We are proud of Ky' Achia Atkins and Edwina Barnette. These ladies majoring in biology were selected to participate in international research opportunities over the summer. Ms. Atkins traveled to France and worked alongside French scientists while conducting research. Ms. Barnette talents took her to Costa Rica to study the effects different treatments have on seedling germination.

In June, the Charleston Chamber Orchestra, which is comprised of West Virginia State University students and faculty musicians in residence took the stage under the direction of Interim Associate Provost Dr. Scott Woodard at Carnegie Hall in New York.

In August, a selection of artwork created by University students went on display at the Robert C. Byrd United States Courthouse in Charleston...a first for the University, and I was blown away by the artistic expression of our students. Thanks to Joshua Martin for leading this inspiring exhibition.

I would like to thank our Provost, Deans and faculty for their tireless work to advance our educational enterprise in alignment with a quality education that we are reinforcing with new innovative and active teaching methodologies. Therefore, knowing that adult learners are one of the fastest growing populations in higher education, in 2016, we have launched 7 fully online academic programs. As a result of these online programs, our online enrollment surged from 25 students in 2015 to over 200 in 2016. And to meet the growing statewide and national demand we rolled out two master's programs one in Computer Science and another in Sports Studies, and at the undergraduate level, we have established and will begin recruiting this year for our new undergraduate degree in engineering.

To add to the long list of state and national rankings we received in 2016 and 2017, we have kept our momentum and this year add:

- Out of the College of Arts and Humanities - the 4th Best Online English Technical Writing Program in the nation;
- Out of our College of Professional Students – the 15th most affordable online Criminal Justice Program in the nation; and
- Out of our College of Business and Social Sciences – we earned accreditation by the Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Program (ACBSP); thus, placing us in the Top 10 percent of Business Schools in the world.



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And just as we are committed to expanding access to adult learners and transfer students, we know it to be equally as important to develop pathways for traditional age students.

One such way we are working to create more pathways for West Virginians to earn an affordable college education is through our Yellow Jacket Connection (YJC) Program, which presents high school students with the opportunity to earn college credit for just \$25 per semester credit hours or - \$75 per course.

To ensure the highest quality dual enrollment program, we sought and earned accreditation by the National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships. WVSU is the only college or university in the State of West Virginia to earn this dual enrollment gold standard. And our efforts are paying off. Our dual enrollment program has grown from 200 students in 2015 to over 1800 students in spring 2018.

Last academic year, we welcomed to campus a Chinese delegation made up of our friends from Ningbo University of Technology in China. Our partnership resulted in 76 Chinese students participating in our first cohort class. I would like to thank Dr. Sonya Armstrong who traveled and taught in China to help get our inaugural cohort off the ground. The second cohort has grown to 174 students.

As a research University, the research we are conducting not only elevates the University, but it is changing our state and people's lives.

Dr. Umesh Reddy received a Vegetable Publication Award from the American Society for Horticultural Science (ASHS), in recognition of the most outstanding paper on vegetable crops published in 2017.

Thanks to our research faculty and R&D Corporation, we have received grant funds totaling over \$8.1 million from the USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture for research projects addressing food security.

The grants fund two proposed research projects to improve the health benefits of certain fruits and vegetables, while providing hands-on learning opportunities for 16 graduate and undergraduate students.

I have often said, any college or university that fails to engage, inspire and connect with future generations; will soon fail to exist. At WVSU, our commitment to the youth and the next generation is unquestionable.

This past summer, our Extension and Academic Affairs collaborated to bring over 1,100 youth from throughout the region to campus for a series of science-themed day camps hosted by the university's 4-H program and the Center for the Advancement of Science, Technology,



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Engineering and Mathematics, topics focused on agriculture education, environmental science, STEM, rocketry, and natural resources of West Virginia.

Our Healthy Grandfamilies program, an initiative developed to help grandparents who are raising their grandchild due to the devastating opioid epidemic, was published in the Journal of Extension in September, marking the second time that a West Virginia State project has been featured in the highly respected peer-reviewed publication. Other states and universities are seeking to duplicate our program and CBS National News has featured stories on the program's impact.

As many colleges and universities are faced with shrinking state funding, external funding is becoming more critical. This past year, we raised over \$2.4 million dollars in new gifts and commitments. This is more than twice what we raised the year before, and the second highest outright cash raised in the history of the University.

We also welcomed 134 new members into our President's Circle. Increasing our overall membership to 331 – the highest ever.

This year 100 percent of the President's Cabinet made financial contributions to the University along with 60 percent of faculty and 33 percent of staff.

In April we held our annual Black & Gold Gala on campus for the first time in the D. Stephen and Diane H. Walker Convocation Center. Nearly 400 sponsors, supporters and alumni gathered on campus to celebrate STATE's profound contributions to the region and those who make it possible, raising another record \$130,000 to benefit University students and programs.

On August 25, 2018, WVSU received unprecedented national coverage by the Washington Times, Huffington Post, Newsweek, CNN, and several major social media platforms as nearly 1,000 students, faculty, staff, alumni, friends, and community members joined together on campus to celebrate the extraordinary legacy and the 100th birthday of our alumna Katherine Johnson by erecting a statue and endowing a \$200,000 scholarship in her honor, exceeding the campaign goal by nearly \$100,000.

We need to do better in expanding our outreach to more alumni and friends, especially alumni. They know better than anyone the value and quality of a West Virginia State education and how it can improve lives. There is no question we have some of the most loyal alumni in the nation. And while we have reached the highest percent of alumni giving in the history of our University – only 4.5 percent support the University financially. That is why I am setting a goal to achieve 6 percent alumni giving by 2022.

And while our advancement team is expanding and building new relationships, it is the vision of what we strive to become that is helping drive greater support for WVSU. Thanks to everyone for helping WVSU reach these significant milestones.



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And speaking of significant milestones - I have to take a moment to brag on the Yellow Jacket Nation. The 2017-2018 academic year was incredible for our student athletes and coaches:

- Our Women's Softball team won the Mountain East Conference championship and advanced to the NCAA DII regionals;
- Our Women's Tennis team won its 6th regular season title and advanced to the NCAA DII sweet sixteen. Making WVSU the first Mountain East Conference school to achieve this accomplishment;
- Our Football team celebrated an exciting winning season;
- Our Women's and Men's Basketball teams and our Baseball team all advanced to the Mountain East Conference tournament; and
- And I want to give a shout out to our Women's Cross Country team...this Band of Sisters continues to compete vigorously in the spirit of the Yellow Jacket Nation.

But what I am most proud of is that 123 of our 218 (57%) student athletes completed the 2017-2018 academic year with a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher.

Under the direction of Athletic Director, Nate Burton - our Athletics secured nearly \$358,000 to support our student athletes. This is the most revenue generated in the history of our athletic program. I want to congratulate our students, coaches, support staff and Athletic Director on a great year.

Over the next several years, we will concentrate on improving our University through the perspective of three pillars: Innovation, Student Success & Retention, and Experiential Learning. These pillars will drive our sustainability, relevancy and competitiveness. We will adapt what we do with the end goal to become a destination for talented students and partnerships across West Virginia, our region, and the world. This year our focus is on expanding many of our outstanding academic programs.

With regard to Innovation – we will continue fostering an environment to challenge and support our faculty to think and teach differently. Through the use of technology and greater professional development, as well as new innovative and active teaching methods, we will enhance how we prepare our students so that they continue to compete and succeed regardless of their chosen career path.

Our faculty are academic role models, and this is why we boast one of the state's best Criminal Justice programs. Under the leadership of Dean Paige Carney, Dr. Walter Stroupe and, Criminal Justice Chair Leighann Davidson, we are strengthening the program to include a much sought after forensic science cognate. With funding support from our WVSU Foundation we are building a state-of-the-art forensic science lab and a curriculum that will better prepare our students for career opportunities, provide greater experiential learning, align our teaching with industry standards and expectations, increase research opportunities and move us towards becoming a Social Justice Center of Excellence.



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In our highly regarded Computer Science Program, we will embed a focus on Cyber Security. This focus will equip our graduates with the skill sets and the readiness to fill the nearly 4 million Cyber Security jobs already existing in our state and nation.

Ask any principal in West Virginia who graduates the best teachers and without hesitation an overwhelming majority will say West Virginia State.

Over the coming year – thanks to the generosity of Fred D. Thomas, Jr., a 1950 alumnus, we are building within the Education Department a state-of-the-art teacher Innovation Learning Center that will not only advance the preparation of our students, but also better position them to directly impact the state’s next generation of young learners and the state’s K-12 education system. In addition, we seek to position this new Center to serve as a hub to enhance lifelong learning and continuous development of teachers across the State of West Virginia. Through our education faculty we will collaborate with our K-12 partners and identify innovative and intrusive strategies to help close the academic achievement gap and increase the college going rate of more West Virginians.

Our goal to remain relevant and competitive will rely heavily on our ability to adapt to the changing needs around us. And while we cannot and will not be all things to all people, we must carefully pivot and move into spaces where there is emerging demands and opportunities. Like nursing.

According to the American Nurses Association, by 2022 there will be a need for 3.4 million nurses, a 20 percent increase compared with current levels. In West Virginia, 50 of West Virginia’s 55 counties are federally designated, either in part or full, as Health Professional Shortage Areas.

This is why, last fall I gathered a team from around campus and beyond to begin discussions and the planning for a Bachelor of Science Nursing degree. Our efforts were based on four significant factors: First, I felt confident that our strong track record in STEM would allow us to develop one of our state’s strongest nursing degree programs; second, I felt we could help our state address its growing need for more nurses; third, I encountered too many students who have a strong desire to attend West Virginia State, but are forced to go elsewhere simply because we do not offer a BSN degree; and finally, I felt such a degree, like our new engineering program, could help sustain and grow the University. I am pleased to announce that HEPC has approved our Bachelor of Science Nursing degree.

I want to thank everyone who played a role in helping the University achieve significant accomplishment. Especially, Interim Chancellor Carolyn Long and HEPC, Governor Gail Pitchford, the John L. Dickinson Family Foundation for their \$500,000 grant, as well as Vice President Pat Schumann, Provost Kumara Jayasuriya and Chief of Staff Dr. DeNeia Thomas.

The growth of West Virginia State University is the lifeline of our existence. Last week, our newly formed Enrollment Management team met and I laid out their charge to develop a



comprehensive plan to outline strategic growth of the University over the next decade. The team, under the direction of Vice President for Enrollment Management and Student Affairs, Dr. Yvette Underdue-Murph, will formulate realist and obtainable short and long-term enrollment goals and strategies – based on the changing landscape of higher education within West Virginia and throughout the nation. The team will develop, implement and expand current recruitment strategies. The growth will be strategic, not uniformed. We will have more targeted approaches to grow our university at the undergraduate, graduate and online levels with a focus on transfer students and adult learners.

Complimenting their efforts will be our Straight 2 STATE Program, WVSU Loyalty Program, and Yellow Jacket Summer Bridge to Success that we rolled out last year.

The enrollment growth of West Virginia State University is all of our responsibility and I deeply appreciate the willingness of our alumni, led by Dr. Lateef Saffore, President - National Alumni Association, to aid in these efforts.

It does little good to enroll students if they do not earn a college degree. At West Virginia State University, we embrace the fact that 48 percent of students are Pell eligible – the highest among any college or university in the state. We also embrace the fact that because of financial and life reasons many of our students will take a little longer than the traditional four or six years to earn their college degree...but they will earn it!

That is why we are investing more and taking strategic action to ensure they have the support, services and environment for them to do so.

The University's retention efforts will be led by Dr. Shannon McGhee. Dr. McGhee joined us this fall and has already hit the ground running. Dr. McGhee will chair the University's Retention Team and work to improve retention across the university with a focus on increasing first, second and third year persistence as well as our four and six year graduation rates.

We are creating a newly designed Student Success Center in Wallace Hall. The goal is to develop a cohesive one-stop shop for students seeking to maintain their academic success as well as assist those who require additional academic coaching, advising, and wrap-around services. To this end, we want to ensure the success for all students.

Experiential Learning is essential to the holistic development and preparation of our students – we are again looking at how our 21st century students thrive and offering opportunities that expand beyond the classroom.

The first step in the process is that every students is engaged in innovative active learning environments. Students should have the opportunities to learn and interact with people who lived experiences that are different from their own, and every student brings their intellect to the table and everyone learns to communication across differences. These are the skills that employers are looking for. I believe this is something we do well through our; research rookies, internships,



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athletics, the corps of cadets, and many student competitions all provide this. But we will continue to improve on what we do and how we embed more intentional opportunities in our curriculum. We will prepare our students to address complex problems and global needs. It is my challenge to you to help us develop opportunities for students through companies you work for or have retired from.

We will commit ourselves to expand opportunities and raise financial support for more students to participate in study abroad programs and look at how to extend international partnerships for students to study and earn degrees at West Virginia State University. Our partnerships with China and Mexico are just a start. Through Academic Affairs, we will develop global partnerships with Africa, South America, Dubai and others.

These are all reasons as to why I have launched the Presidential Scholarship challenge – to raise \$400,000...I believe we owe it to them, our state and our nation. Because our country needs their intellectual talent.

Speaking of talent, West Virginia State University has long been a catalyst and at the forefront for developing pathway to higher education for many underprivileged youth in the Kanawha Valley. Last year, we were devastated when the U.S. Department of Education revoked our Upward Bound grant. A grant we successfully used to help students and held at West Virginia State University for more than 50 years.

In an effort to reverse this action, I reached out to two of our biggest supporters, and they did not disappoint me. This fall, thanks to the hard work and the unwavering commitment to West Virginia State and the State of West Virginia - our two great United States Senators, Joe Manchin and Shelley Moore Capito, successfully had our Upward Bound program restored. Because of their advocacy the U.S. Department of Education awarded West Virginia State \$2.5 million over the next five years, to once again offer Upward Bound programming on our campus. Now with our funding restored, we are getting back to inspiring future generations to seek their full potential that is achievable through higher education.

We are proud to be one of the states three research universities. Our remarkable progress in research is impressive. In a span of 18 years, we have gone from less than \$1 million annually in grant funding to more than \$16 million annually – and this has been driven by our amazing faculty and our R&D Corporation.

Over the next two years, we will forge partnerships with sister institutions throughout the state and nation to secure more federal and state contracts and grants. Provost Kumara Jayasuriya and Vice President Dr. Orlando McMeans along with the commitment of our faculty will expand interdisciplinary research across the University as we seek to obtain our research goal of \$20 million annually by 2020.

Our research faculty will also have a new home in which to continue their groundbreaking research and move us toward this goal. This fall, under the leadership of Dr. Orlando F.



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McMeans and the direction of Dr. Ulises Toledo, we will complete our newly Integrated Research and Extension Complex. The Complex costing just over \$7 million dollars features labs to conduct research associated with Aquatic Toxicology, Bioenergy, Plant Genomics and Horticulture, and Soil Science. It offers multipurpose amenities, including an auditorium, a multipurpose classroom, a dual conference room, a kitchen classroom, and more. The second floor is currently shelled and will house our new Criminal Justice Forensic lab, as well as our chemical engineering lab thanks to the American Electric Power Foundation who awarded us a \$250,000 grant; which is timely as the state continues to position itself as a future storage hub site for some of our nation's most precious resources.

Our success over the years has in large part been possible because of the growing number of alumni, friends, and supporters who believe in and are willing to invest in the Hometown University that is doing so much for our state, region and nation.

During our 127 year history, thousands of young women and men have started their journey to a better life here with a degree from West Virginia State University; and from here they have gone on to change the world and every environment they have entered - because that is what Yellow Jackets do. And that is the expectation we have for our students sitting here today.

As we design "West Virginia State University of the Future" we will do so under the banner of our new slogan..."It Starts at STATE."

As you look around, you will notice the world is changing every day and this is what opportunity looks like for the first-generation students, the non-traditional students, and for Yellow Jackets who surpass their own expectations. The pathway you create is the one you make for yourself. As Yellow Jackets we share experiences, and we share possibilities. What starts here changes the world. What you achieve here will stay with you, forever. Your future is waiting and...It Starts at STATE!

Who would have thought that a young woman from White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia who traveled to West Virginia State with dreams of being a research mathematician would one day help man travel into space.

Who would have thought that a young man from Alexandria, Virginia, who came to West Virginia State to play basketball, would go on to become the first African-American to play and coach in the NBA, and forever be enshrined in the Basketball Hall of Fame.

Not every story has to lead to the stars, or to the hall of fame, to be significant; to be a part of our story -- the STATE story.

Whatever our students achieve in life, in large part starts right here on this campus; within these walls and on these hollow grounds. Not one of them can do it alone – as did none of us before them. Because of everyone who supports and believes in West Virginia State – our future will be sustainable; because students continue to enroll and we meet their educational and holistic needs



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– we will remain relevant; and because our contributions change lives, advance industry, and lifts our country – we will always be competitive.

No matter where you want to go in life, or what you want to be, It Starts at State.
Thank you, God Bless, Enjoy Homecoming and Go STATE!”

President Anthony L. Jenkins, Ph.D.
West Virginia State University