



**STATE OF THE UNIVERSITY ADDRESS**

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Oct. 3, 2019

**2019 State of the University Address:**

“Good afternoon and welcome to the 2019 State of the University. Thank you Colleen for getting us started. Thanks to everyone for coming out today. It is a privilege to continue this great tradition at West Virginia State University, and to have so many of our Yellow Jackets, friends and special guests join us. There are few stakeholders that I would like to acknowledge. So please when your name is called, stand up so we can recognize you.

- Our Board of Governors, led by Board Chair Charles Jones
- Members of the WVSU Foundation Board, led by Mark Pendleton
- National Alumni Association Executive Board and Leadership Team, led by Dr. Lateef Saffore
- Ms. Colleen Miller, who you had the pleasure of meeting earlier, President of the Student Government Association, her SGA Cabinet and Mr. and Miss State
- Dr. Richard Ford, Faculty Senate Chair
- Ms. Robin Tabor, Staff Council Chair
- The President’s Cabinet, and our four Academic Deans
- Our Elected Officials

West Virginia State remains a dynamic University that continuously adapts to meeting the emerging opportunities of our state, nation and world. One reason for our success is the strong leadership of past presidents, our committed Board of Governors and dedicated faculty, staff, alumni and partners. Thanks for all that you do for WVSU.

My wife Toinette and daughters, Ashley and Alicia are with us today, and we want to thank everyone for the ongoing support during our time at WVSU and I want to thank them for allowing me to serve as your President. Thank you girls.

At West Virginia State University, we are driven to help our students acquire the knowledge and develop skills and abilities to meet the higher education and economic development needs of our state and nation. These skills and abilities include effective communication, creative inquiry, critical thinking, intercultural competencies, thoughtful expression, and through research converting data into usable information.

These student learning outcomes will not only allow us to make significant in-roads towards achieving our vision of becoming a premier regional research university that is recognized



nationally for its quality education, innovative teaching and experiential learning, but they also will guide our curricula and co-curricula offerings; thereby, preparing students to continue their education at the graduate or professional school levels or entering the workforce and driving the 21<sup>st</sup> century economy.

Over the next several minutes, I am proud to share with you what we have accomplished over the last year as well as talk about our plans to ensure our University remains competitive, relevant and sustainable in the years to come.

As a leading University within the landscape of higher education, the emphasis we place on the quality of our education has not only been recognized by higher education ranking organizations; the expertise of our faculty has captured the attention of a growing number of state and federal agencies, sister institutions, and national foundations.

As such, more people are wanting to partner with us. This past year, Dr. Walter Stroupe, Dr. Leighann Davidson, Dr. Kerri Steele and Dr. Frehot Hailou were awarded a \$440,000.00 grant from the Center for Advancing Opportunity through the Thurgood Marshall College Fund. The project will be an exploratory study using data collected by The West Virginia Department of Corrections & Rehabilitation. This study will investigate five evidence-based programs and their impact on recidivism rates right here in West Virginia.

Last fall, led by Dr. Micheal Fultz, West Virginia State joined a statewide consortium of institutions to support first generation STEM students. The First2Network provides resources in professional development, research, and leadership opportunities to students who are the first in their immediate family to attend college. As a first-generation college student myself, and understanding that first-generation students make up nearly 40% our campus population, I am honored that we hosted our first class of First2Scholars over the summer and they worked in research labs in cancer biology, organic synthesis, and environmental monitoring. We are excited to foster our partnership with the First2Network as well as preparing to welcome a new cohort of students this year.

Last October, with the leadership of Interim Dean Deborah Williams and Dean Naveed Zaman, we established a partnership with Infor. Infor is a multi-national enterprise software company, that is focused on business applications for organizations delivered by cloud computing. Through this partnership, we will expand, build, strengthen and align our curriculum with where industry is headed; thus, helping to better prepare our students and make them more career ready. The partnership will provide our students access to internships and job opportunities with companies from around the world.

Our mission to serve our state and meet its needs drives our dedication. This is precisely why we are developing a Bachelor's of Science in Nursing degree. This summer we secured clinical sites with the #1 ranked hospital in West Virginia - CAMC. We also established partnerships with Thomas Health System, Family Care Health Center, Highland Hospital, Stonerise Healthcare, and West Virginia Health Right.



Working to establish our first ever BSN program has been the results of many people and foundations, such as: - the Dickinson Family Foundation, the Maier Foundation and the Jacobson Family Foundation all played a role in helping us achieve our goal. Our on campus site visit was led by Dr. Paige Carney, Dr. DeNeia Thomas, Vice President Pat Schumann, former Provost, Dr. Kumara Jayasuriya, Dr. Scott Woodard, and our Nursing Advisory Council, which included Dr. Kathy Harper, Ms. Lindsay Good, Ms. Jameelah Means, Mr. Dayton Wilson, Interim Vice President Kristi Williams and Dr. Aaron Settle. Thank you all for your help and leadership. Our BSN program will be led by Dr. Mary Sizemore. Thank you.

Teaching is an ever evolving profession, and through the use of innovation we believe it is possible to further enhance the quality of our education, teacher preparation and improve student engagement and learning.

Thanks to the generosity of Fred D. Thomas, Jr., a 1950 graduate of STATE, the teachers graduating from WVSU will now learn and develop their skills and abilities in a high-tech facility. The Fred D. Thomas Jr., Learning Center will help us prepare our students more effectively and efficiently. I want to thank Pat Wilson, Chair of Education for her leadership.

At STATE, we believe everyone on our campus is an educator. We all contribute to the growth and success of our students. That is why the work and portfolio of our Counseling and Accessibility Services Office has significantly expanded over the past few years.

Under the leadership of Mrs. Kellie Toledo, we developed our Collegiate Recovery Program. The purpose is to establish a community of support that allows students with substance abuse and addiction challenges to navigate, socialize and interact on campus in ways that contribute successfully to their health and wellness.

Data collected from collegiate recovery programs nationwide show that students in programs like these have nearly a 90 percent graduation rate. I would like to thank, Mrs. Kellie Toledo and Ms. Robin Tabor for their leadership of this program.

When we developed our one-stop shop Student Success Center, the emphasis was to have a more laser focus on the holistic development and success of our students. Under the direction of Dr. Shannon McGhee, Director of Retention and Student Success – we are focused on using the latest technology, best practices and learning methodologies to help all students create success strategies, maintain their current level of academic success and/or better master academic content. Dr. McGhee and her team are helping to change the culture and expectations of our campus as it relates to proactive intrusive wrap around services. Will you all please stand and be recognized?

The good news is that initial assessments indicate things are moving in the right direction – all thanks to the collective effort from everyone across campus.



A primary component to increase retention and graduation rates is connecting students to campus. Ensuring they feel valued, supported, nurtured, and a sense of belonging, is crucial. Students who are immersed in such a campus environment have higher GPAs, retention and graduation rates and a more overall satisfying college experience. I want to thank our First Lady, Toinette for her Sisters of STATE (S.O.S) initiative. Her women's empowerment conference, breast cancer awareness program and STOMP the Yard celebration event are contributing to the cultural shift taking place on our campus.

For nearly four years you have heard me talk about experiential learning. Experiential learning can lead to more powerful academic learning experience and help students achieve greater intellectual growth.

Our goal is to expand Experiential Learning across all disciplines and beyond the classroom. Through our CARES Day, students are afforded the opportunity to embrace our mission of meeting the needs of those within our community and to connect. This annual tradition not only provides students the opportunity to bring their gifts to society, it re-enforces the notion that we grow and learn by helping others. This effort enriches the lives of our students and empowers them to understand their value proposition. It also has a financial value for our community. In the past three years the economic impact of our volunteers has reached over \$205,000. I want to thank all of our students, volunteers and especially Mr. Joey Oden for his leadership in developing and growing this invaluable learning experience.

Historian Dr. Michael Workman, assisted by West Virginia State faculty member, Dr. Billy Joe Peyton, this past summer conducted a history field school. Seven West Virginia State students participated in the experiential learning opportunity.

The field school location was Fort Scammon, an 1863 Civil War earthworks located atop Fort Hill in Charleston. The goal was to unearth the Powder Magazine and other fort features. The field school was done in cooperation with the City of Charleston and the Fort Hill Garden Club. As an outstanding Conductor, Dr. Scott Woodard, associate provost and associate vice president for academic affairs, led the Charleston Chamber Orchestra this summer, which is comprised of WVSU faculty and students, at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Capital Orchestra Festival in Washington, D.C. Earlier this summer, the Orchestra performed at Carnegie Hall in New York for the Viennese Master's Orchestra Invitational – and next summer, Dr. Woodard and the orchestra will perform in Vienna, Austria.

Our strength in STEM is validated through our Research Rookies Program. Housed in the College of Natural Sciences and Mathematics, it is a shining example of experiential learning at its best. Students who participate in our Research Rookies program have – presented at national conferences, studied abroad, published their findings and boast a mean GPA of 3.3, and a retention rate of 85 percent, a record high. Thanks to all participating faculty and students for making this program a huge success.



From the laboratory to the classroom, from the field to the greenhouse, West Virginia State University conducts research that is highly applicable and responsive to agricultural, environmental and societal needs of our state.

We continue to be a major force in groundbreaking research across our state and beyond. Our external research has increased every year over the past three years and is expected to climb even further this year.

In spring 2019, we officially opened our Integrated Research and Extension Building (IREB). The new facility will serve as the cornerstone in our research goal of reaching \$20 million annually by 2023. The IREB offers our research faculty and graduate research assistants a state-of-the-art laboratory space to conduct the latest cutting-edge research. I would like to thank our faculty, the Office of Sponsored Programs staff, our Division of Research and Public Service and all those engaged in research and grant writing that has a hand in helping us remain relevant and competitive in the national landscape of research. Thank you.

We are using our faculty, staff and research – to lean in: The rise of the opioid epidemic in West Virginia has resulted in an increase in grandparents raising their grandchildren. West Virginia is ranked #2 nationally in percentage of children being raised by grandparents. WVSU has garnered national recognition as a leader in addressing this important issue. We are working toward creating the first Center for Excellence on Grandfamilies in the nation right here at STATE. Thank you Extension Specialist Bonnie Dunn, Dr. Kerri Steele – Chair of the Social Work Department, and Ms. Yvonne Lee – who was recently appointed to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Advisory Council to Support Grandparents Raising Grandchildren. There is no question that our work is impressing many around the state. On March 15, 2019, West Virginia Governor Jim Justice signed the state budget bill into law; and in doing so he ensured West Virginia State University received, for the first time in our history, our full state land-grant match. That was an historic and landmark moment for our university. I want to thank everyone for their help and their efforts to accomplish this goal.

With our full state-match we are developing plans to extend our reach into all 55 counties across the state. This will not only have a significant impact on the quality of life for West Virginians, it will also increase the \$254 million economic impact we currently have on the state.

The success of any institution requires leadership that is both externally and internally facing – and over the last year we have done well, thanks to so many. Looking inward, we have worked to ensure our 123-acre campus is a spacious, beautiful and safe environment for our students to live, study and start their journey. It is important that our facilities are state-of-the-art, clean, comfortable, engaging and reflects the brand, image and pride of the Yellow Jacket Nation. That is why over the past year, we have invested over \$1 million dollars in campus-wide upgrades and construction in technology, facilities, and security. Some of these upgrades include our Wilson University Union, Katherine Johnson Plaza, the University Library, our Fitness Center, Keith Hall, Hamblin Hall, Classrooms, Family Care Center, security measures, as well as our campus grounds are more student-centered, visually appealing and more user-friendly than ever before.



And this year we will break ground on our Chemical Engineering and Forensic Science Labs. I would like to acknowledge the team for their leadership: Mr. Eric Jackson, Mr. Dayton Wilson, Mrs. Trina Sweeney, Chief Joe Saunders, Mr. Alan Skidmore, and Ms. Pam Slate (with ABM)

There was great excitement and anticipation for the upcoming athletic season and our student-athletes have not disappointed. The quality of our student-athletes and the high level at which they compete is second to none – our student-athletes are making a lot of noise on and off the field of competition.

Last year, we begin laying the groundwork to introduce Women's Soccer to the Yellow Jacket Nation. This past August, 17 incredible women led by head coach Lisa Mann made history by defeating Urbana 3-2 in the program's first-ever competition. Congratulations Coach and Lady Yellow Jackets. Please stand and be recognized.

A few more outstanding highlights from our student-athletes, I just could not pass up.

- Women's tennis, led by head coach John Sims won its fifth MEC Tournament title and advanced to the Round of the Sweet 16 in the NCAA Division II Women's Tennis Championship for the second consecutive season. Ladies please stand and be recognized.
- Softball, led by head coach Mattie Best, claimed its first-ever MEC South Division title and hosted an NCAA Regional for the first time in program history. Congratulations ladies, job well done, please stand to be recognized.
- Volleyball, led by head coach Kris Kern had a record winning season and earned its first bid in the MEC Championship Tournament for the first time in 5 years. Congrats Ladies, Congrats Coach, please stand and be recognized.
- Last year, we made school history when our Men's basketball team, led by head coach Bryan Poore squared off against Fairmont State University for our first ever televised game; hosted on AT&T SportsNet Pittsburgh, putting the Yellow Jacket Nation in front of more than 3 million households.
- Football, led by head coach John Pennington posted a winning record for the second consecutive season...and this year they have started the season on fire! And this year, we will make school history again, when our Yellow Jackets football team will face off against our cross town rivals the University of Charleston for our first ever televised football game on Nov. 2 from Dickerson Stadium.
- Our student-athletes, set an academic record with the best-ever cumulative term GPA of 3.2 and consecutive semesters over a 3.1 GPA, a historic first. Would all of our student athletes please stand and be recognized.
- Under the direction of Athletic Director Nate Burton, our Athletic Department secured over \$430,000 in support of athletics during the 2018-19 fiscal year to set a new record for funds raised. Thank you Nate Burton, Kerri Blackwell and Sean McAndrews for their leadership of our athletic department.



Raising external funding to support our students and university is essential. This past spring our Seventh Annual Black & Gold Gala broke all previous records for impact, attendance and funds raised. The Gala raised more than \$150,000 to support West Virginia State students and programs. I would like to thank Vice President Pat Schumann and the entire Gala planning committee for a job well done. Will you all please stand and be recognized.

When it comes to securing funding for our university, we have ambitious plans and bold ideas, all of which will require the strong backing of our advancement team. This past fiscal year – our total external funds raised, through contributions from our amazing alumni, external friends and partners, as well as our work with federal and state lawmakers, secured funding that is six times more than three years ago.

Also, this past year we experienced a record high increase in Corporate Foundation partnerships giving to West Virginia State. I thank all of our supporters for helping propel West Virginia State forward. Thank you.

In keeping our momentum, we have a goal of increasing alumni giving to 6 percent by 2022, and while the number of alumni who give reached record high of 4.5 percent (in 2017-18) – this is a pretty small fraction of those who are deeply committed to the institution. In fact, even at 6 percent, we will still be out paced by many of our peer institutions, but puts us in the conversation. Therefore, I am calling on all of our alumni to help us achieve this goal. This is a great opportunity for us to showcase the strength of our alumni. When we all give to STATE, it creates a sense of engagement and ownership in the success of the University we love so dear. This fall, with a collaboration of students, faculty, staff, alumni, administrators and community partners, we will come together to embark on the development of our new strategic plan. One that continuously evolves as it guides and measures our progress towards our goals.

We will also continue preparation for our Higher Learning Commission 2020 accreditation visit. Would our accreditation team leaders – lead by Dr. Tom Kiddie and Dr. Scott Woodard – please stand.

This coming year, our number one top priority will be the enrollment growth of our university. Becoming a destination for talent will require new, bold, and aggressive strategies. In doing so, we will commit to developing specific strategies to not only increase our overall enrollment, but to also increase our recruitment of African-American, under-represented, and underserved students populations including those who are first-generation, veterans and low-income. We have begun growing in these demographics, but we are not there yet. We will also focus on enrollment growth of graduate, transfer, online and returning adult learners.

Increasing financial aid will also be critical. We have and will always work to keep tuition low. This will help to ensure all our graduates are not burdened by excessive debt. And while, I believe we can do more to help drive down student debt, I make note that our students graduating debt of \$22,000 is less than the nation average of \$30,000 (College Board, 2018). Last year, we



awarded over \$630,000 in merit and need-based scholarships, a record high. And while this is a good start, I know we can do more.

The highest purpose of our teaching mission is to prepare the next generation of Yellow Jackets for lives of meaningful and impactful service to our society. We have a responsibility to expose our students to broader diverse experiences that extend beyond the boundaries of our campus.

We will continue our commitment to better blend theory and practice in all of our classes. Whether we bring companies and situations to the classroom or we take our students out into the community, we will seek to create opportunities for our students to help companies and industry in our region develop ideas, improve their bottom line, and find solutions to challenges they face.

Entrepreneurship and Innovation will be expanded to play a more significant role in the education we provide our students. We will launch our efforts to develop an Entrepreneurship and Innovation Center and a curriculum that will cut across disciplines, with a focus on job creation, incubator startups, project-based consulting, and talent development.

In addition, we will not only place greater importance on better preparing our students, we will seek to more rapidly prepare our traditional and non-traditional students through the use of expanding interdisciplinary education, developing stackable credentials, competency-based education, and high demand areas of concentrations; such as Cyber Security, Economics with an emphasis in Agriculture Commodities, Biology with an emphasis in Agriculture Biotechnology, and Marketing with an emphasis in Agriculture.

As we prepare students who will lead the way in developing solutions and advancing our society, it is important for our students to be immersed in the world and learn while sharing the WVSU philosophy beyond the borders of the United States. That is why we will invest fully in developing a student study abroad program, that supports students venturing out into the world.

As we continue our groundbreaking research – the goal will be to expand our existing Translational Research currently being conducted by our outstanding research faculty. They will lead the charge in applying our research to solve issues and change the environment around us.

Enhancing “Institutional Excellence” will be at the core of our work in the coming years. The goal of Institutional Excellence is to align the university strategic priorities in the most effective ways possible. We will work to eliminate the barriers, the unnecessary work flows and redundant efforts that can develop in any organization. I want to challenge everyone to find ways to be more agile and embrace the mindset of seeking continuous improvement.

We will continue to work to establish a strong, efficient, sustainable financial structure that will support our vision. Our goal is to be best in class and I have great confidence in the ability of our university team and our leadership to make this happen.



WEST VIRGINIA STATE  
UNIVERSITY

It starts at STATE

Athletic Director Nate Burton, will remain focused on enhancing the game day experience, expanding our fan base, developing sports related traditions, and creating an athletic complex that takes the Yellow Jacket Nation and athletics to the next level.

This year we will enter the growing phenomena of E-sports. E-sports is competitive, organized video gaming that attracts players and students from around the world. The program will be managed through our Division of Student Affairs as a club sport.

As we are quickly moving through another exciting year at West Virginia State, I hope everyone will consider what STATE means to them, their families, our students and to West Virginia.

When Toinette and I arrived in Institute nearly four years ago, we joined this community imagining West Virginia State's potential future as a leading university of higher education.

Today, the university we imagined is taking shape right before our eyes. Because of how we have repositioned WVSU - our students, faculty, leadership, brand, reputation, and impact are respected and involved in higher education spaces and conversations we have never been in before; thus let me be clear, the value proposition of our University has never been stronger! We see it in the quality of our faculty, staff, and student talent from around the world that is attracted to our academic programs and beautiful campus. We also see it in the incredible partnerships we have and are continuing to build.

We have before us the opportunity to do something great for so many who place their hopes and dreams in the administration, faculty, and staff of this University. There will be challenges along the way, and this will require us to work smarter and together and use our intellectual talents – and we can do it! Just look how far we have come. Together, there is nothing we cannot accomplish. Our journey starts right here today...It Starts At STATE.

Thank you, Enjoy Homecoming and GO STATE!"

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