



Patrick F. Leahy

August 17, 2016

Dear Members of the Wilkes Community:

Strengthening our campus infrastructure is one of our strategic initiatives. Over the summer months, you have seen our facilities team and some outside contractors hard at work across campus. The University is investing more than \$4 million in campus improvements during the summer in preparation for the new academic year. The work is part of an ongoing effort to create a traditional residential campus in our urban environment of Wilkes-Barre. The summer and fall also will see the start of major campus projects at Stark Learning Center and 141 S. Main St. that will total more than \$10 million by the time they are completed.

Late this summer work started at 141 S. Main St. in anticipation of renovations to transform the space into the Karambelas Media Center and the new home for the Sordoni Art Gallery. The media center will house the University's Communication Studies program, including WCLH Radio, The Beacon student newspaper, television studios and Zebra Communications, our student-run public relations agency. The new art gallery will feature exhibition space that is double what exists in the current gallery.

Other major summer facilities projects include:

- Forty-five classrooms across campus will receive \$800,000 in improvements to enhance the learning environment for students. This includes creating five new classrooms in Stark Learning Center and in the Marts Center. More than 500 new chairs on wheels – specially designed for interactive learning – are being added to classrooms for student seating. Other classroom improvements include painting, new floors, carpeting, furnishings and adding smart classroom technology.
- The addition of new bleachers and restrooms at the Schmidt Stadium and upgrading restrooms at the Ralston Athletic Complex are being completed at a combined cost of nearly \$1 million.
- Over \$500,000 in renovations are being made at our student residence, Waller Hall. Improvements being made to this historic mansion now and continuing into the fall include painting, bathroom and kitchen renovations, carpeting, new furniture, lighting improvements and roof repairs.

- During the summer, Wilkes will also begin implementation of the signage and wayfinding project, aimed at better branding our campus and making it easier to navigate. The first phase of the three-phase project beginning this summer will cost \$100,000, with total cost through summer 2017 expected to total more than \$300,000.
- Additional projects strengthening campus infrastructure bring the total investment in summer 2016 to more than \$4 million.
- During the course of the upcoming academic year, planning will begin in earnest for the University's next major project: a full-scale renovation and expansion of the Stark Learning Center. This summer and fall, about \$100,000 will be spent on the preliminary work that will total \$6 million over the course of the next two years. The \$6 million project is being funded by a \$3 million RCAP grant from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania matched by \$3 million in University funding.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Charlie Cary and his facilities team for their great work on these projects. These additions and improvements to our campus will help to make Wilkes a great place for our faculty and staff to work while creating a wonderful learning environment for our students. The projects help us to fulfill our mission to be one of the great small universities in our nation.

Sincerely,

Patrick F. Leahy
President