



# Patrick F. Leahy

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December 23, 2015

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Dear Wilkes University Colleagues:

Today, we close down yet another semester here at Wilkes University. As we approach the winter break, allow me to remind you of the very positive momentum that all of us have created here at Wilkes during the past semester. Together, we ...

... opened and dedicated the new campus Gateway. This campus enhancement connects the heart of our campus (the Fenner Quad) with the heart of the downtown (S. Main Street), advancing our goal of creating a beautiful, residential campus in the urban environment of Wilkes-Barre.

... received the largest gift in our history and renamed the School of Nursing for local businessman, John Passan. This endowment will create for the new Passan School of Nursing an excellence fund, allowing the dean to expend these funds in whatever way she feels it will advance the school.

... re-dedicated Barre Hall for our second Wilkes president, Dr. Francis Michelini. The \$3 million renovation saved an historic building in South Wilkes-Barre from condemnation and now houses our new honors students.

... recruited and hired a new Vice President for University Advancement. Tom MacKinnon, who brings 15 years of capital campaign experience with him, joins us from Marquette University, where he most recently served as Chief of Staff to the President and Interim Vice President for Advancement.

... enlisted the services of Rosi Ponce to help us establish relationships with both governments and individual higher education institutions in Latin America and the Caribbean as a way to recruit talented international students to Wilkes. This is one more way that we are expanding our recruiting efforts and diversifying our campus all at once.

... acquired 32 W. South Street, completed the renovation of Capin Hall for Student Services, and continued our planning for 141 S. Main Street. These are all moves which will allow 141 S. Main to become the new home for an Integrated Media Center to house our Department of Communications Studies and for a greatly expanded and enhanced Sordoni Art Gallery.

... received positive feedback from Middle States on our latest Periodic Review Report. Of 37 institutions reviewed during this cycle, only 16 "passed" without follow-up requirements. Wilkes University was one of them.

... celebrated our one-year anniversary of our HotChalk partnership. In the first year we have enrolled over 500 students in our online nursing programs from over 25 states across the nation.

... completed our first full semester serving undergraduate students in business at our Mesa, AZ location. Currently, we have 60 students enrolled in various programs in Mesa.

... re-confirmed our current BBB stable bond rating with Standard & Poor's. While we ambition to improve our bond rating as a measure of our financial stability, this is good news, as many institutions across American higher education are confronting downgrades due to challenging financial conditions.

... launched the SHINE program in Luzerne County. Like all start-ups, this project will face its share of challenges in the first year or two, but we are pleased to be able to offer academic services to students in need, 100% funded by outside sources.

... achieved a sterling ranking in the latest American college ranking. Continuously published since 1843, The Economist ranked schools for the first time this fall, based on the economic value that each individual institution offers its graduates. Wilkes University placed 25th of 1,275 schools ranked nationwide. 25th in the nation, one place ahead of MIT!

And, all of this is to say nothing of the supportive teaching and compelling research that happens here on this campus day-in and day-out.

While many of us are enjoying the winter break, others here at Wilkes will remain very active throughout the holidays. Over the coming weeks we will offer 19 courses, serving over 150 students in our newly revamped winter session. Also, faculty and staff will be working throughout the break in preparation for our next HotChalk start on January 4th and for the arrival of our first Panamanian cohort on January 9th. I'd like to thank all of these colleagues who are truly helping to make Wilkes a 12-month university.

It has been another positive semester here at Wilkes University, as we continue our quest to become one of the finest small universities in the nation, as evidenced by third party ratings of our performance. My thanks to each and every one of you for your support of Wilkes University.

I wish each of you a happy holiday season and a prosperous 2016!

Patrick F. Leahy  
President