

## **STATE OF THE UNIVERSITY ADDRESS**

PRESIDENT MARVIN KRISLOV

Wednesday, February 22, 2023

Colleagues, students, friends—from the One Pace Plaza Student Center on our New York City Campus, good afternoon. Thank you for being with us today, whether you're here in person or joining remotely. After my remarks, we'll take questions from both those in the room and also those watching on Zoom.

My fellow members of the Pace Community, we are meeting at what I believe is a pivotal moment for our University. A year ago, I announced the transition to our New Normal, a move from the crisis phase of the COVID-19 pandemic to the endemic phase—a time when we'd learn to live with the virus, behave responsibly, and go back to something closer to our normal lives.

One year later, I am very proud to report that we have succeeded. We are back to in-person learning, back to in-person working, back to our in-person lives. Our campuses are busy. Our classrooms are full. Our clubs are meeting, our Setter athletes are competing, and our actors and dancers and singers are performing. We are in our New Normal, and we are thriving.

It is clear to me that the state of our University is strong.

But I will go a step beyond that. I believe we are now laying the groundwork for a University that will be even stronger and more successful in the future.

We are innovating in our academic offerings. We are transforming our physical spaces. We are becoming a better place to work, and we are walking the walk on our commitment to being an inclusive and anti-racist institution. We are building our reputation, boosting our stature, and making a Pace degree even more valuable.

And we are doing all of this—innovating and adapting—so that we will be able to do for the next hundred years what we have done for the previous hundred: deliver on our transformative mission of *Opportunitas*.

We have long been a pillar of New York City and Westchester County, educating the workforce and anchoring our communities. Now we will continue to fulfill that vital role in new and exciting ways, responding to the changing demands of the dynamic world around us.

I want to talk today about our path forward. But first I want to spend a few moments reflecting on where we've been over this last year.

There is no question that it's been good to return to in-person life. I love seeing students, colleagues, and visitors all around our campuses. I love working in person. I love teaching in person. Life has regained a sense of normalcy. But we also know that many things are different. After a year in the New Normal, we've started to get a clear look at what has changed.

Many things have changed for the better.

For example, we have all become expert in remote teaching and learning, remote meetings and remote work. We are using that expertise as we launch new programs with remote and hybrid elements that let us meet students where they are in their busy lives. For our staff and faculty, we're making work more efficient. We're catching up with quick Zooms instead of complicated in-person gatherings. And, like the rest of the world, we're adapting to a hybrid work model when appropriate and helpful.

At the same time, we've also seen that the pandemic has had some real negative effects on all of us—at Pace and across the country. Many people are tired. Many people are frazzled. Some people are facing mental health challenges. The ongoing torrent of awful national and global news—war, gun violence, hate crimes, natural disasters, political polarization—can feel overwhelming. Just last week, the Centers for Disease Control put out the results of a national study showing unprecedented levels of sadness among American teenagers, and especially among teenage girls and LGBT teens.

This national mental health crisis is something that our nation must address—and that we must address at Pace, among our students, and also among our faculty and staff. This leads to the other troubling impact of the pandemic on our University: enrollment and retention.

Don't get me wrong: our enrollment numbers remain strong—and in fact our graduate enrollment is skyrocketing as international travel resumes. Even on the undergraduate level, we fared well through the pandemic, better than we feared and better than many other institutions.

But the national trend of learning loss as students missed months or even years of in-person instruction, combined with the national crisis in mental health, means that there are students who simply decided not to start college, or decided not to continue in their studies. Prior to the pandemic, both our retention rates and our graduation rates were on an upswing. The pandemic set us back.

Right now, thanks to the heroic efforts of Robina Schepp and her team, our undergrad enrollment numbers remain strong. But it has also become clear that we must develop an even stronger focus on retention—to ensure that our students succeed, and that we can continue to deliver on our mission.

**L**et me take a moment on these two points. Mental health and wellbeing, on the one hand, and retention, on the other, are arguably the two biggest challenges facing not just Pace today—but all of higher education. And they're connected. There are of course many other aspects to retention, but at a certain basic level, when our students are better equipped to learn, they are in a better position to continue their studies.

At Pace, we are at work on both fronts.

Under the guidance of our first-ever chief wellness officer, Harriet Feldman, we've been expanding our wellbeing offerings across the university. Earlier this month, we had extraordinary turnout at the three-campus Wellbeing Fair. I signed the Okanagan Charter that

day, committing Pace to an international movement of colleges and universities that are infusing health and wellbeing into everything we do.

We are also ensuring that when our students need help, they can get it. Our Counseling Centers are fully staffed and busy as ever. Utilization rates for individual and group counseling sessions are up 10 percent over last year. We are now offering the WellTrack suite of services, which means that students always have access to a live, trained counselor—even when they call the Counseling Centers at night or on weekends or holidays.

Richard Shadick, who runs our Counseling Centers, asks that I remind any students listening today to fill out the Healthy Minds Survey. Answers are anonymous—but will help us better support our students.

And I want to note that while our Counseling Centers serve only students, we know that the people who work at Pace need support, too. Many if not most of our wellbeing initiatives are open to faculty and staff. HR's Pace Yourself to Wellness program offers employee wellness activities throughout the year. And please remember that the Employee Assistance Program is available for all Pace employees, whether or not you use Pace-provided health insurance.

**T**o address retention over the last several years, we bolstered our Learning Centers and built new supports in areas where we knew they were needed, like math and writing. We hired adjunct faculty to provide tutoring, and to train student tutors. Now, under the leadership of Interim Provost Joe Franco, we are beginning a comprehensive examination of our retention efforts to address the new challenges, guided by a Retention Task Force that was charged in December.

Professors Nancy Reagin and Lisa Fastenberg are co-chairing that group, and it is expected to produce data-driven recommendations for improvements by the end of April. Subcommittees are focused on areas including advising, classroom experience, the Learning Centers, and resources for students most at-risk. And we're continuing to review our existing support programs. The goal is to produce short-term and long-term strategies that will increase our first-year retention rate to 85 percent—last fall it was 72 percent—and our six-year

graduation rate to 70 percent—with the Class of 2022 it reached an all-time high of 61 percent.

But I want to make clear that as important as the work of this task force is, we haven't been waiting for its results to get started. These aren't just statistics; these are students. And we need to work hard to help as many as we can, even as we refine our long-term strategies. I know our innovative and resourceful faculty and staff—especially those working in advisement—are doing that important work every day.

Last year we created what became known as the SSWOT Team—that's the Senior Stop-Out and Withdrawal Oversight Team. We want to make sure students who are close to graduating get across that finish line. A collaborative effort of Central Advisement, Financial Aid, and Student Accounts, last year the SSWOT Team successfully brought back more than half of the students they targeted, who then finished their degrees. This year, the team is focused on a new cohort.

We've been making extra efforts like this since the pandemic—reaching out to students, seeing what they need, doing our best to help them achieve their goals. We are doing that with stopped-out students. We are doing that with prospective students. We should be doing that with any students we see struggling in any way—academically or emotionally or with food insecurity.

I like to say that student success is everyone's job. I truly believe that. At the end of the day, our focus is our students, and it's on us to make sure they get the support they need.

We are also doing the unglamorous, nuts-and-bolts work that will make a real difference. Last week you saw Nicole Thompson's announcement about the PaceWorks project, our comprehensive effort to improve student-facing administrative processes.

We're all familiar with that dreaded term, "the Pace runaround." I can't promise today that we'll immediately solve everything. But this project is a disciplined, data-driven, and holistic effort to leverage technology to make things a lot better.

For staff, the result of PaceWorks will be more automated processes, less time on data entry, and more time on high-value tasks. For faculty, you'll have more and better insight into student progress and alerts when students aren't on track. And students will find it much easier to learn about degree requirements and course prerequisites, and to complete tasks that should be easy—like applying to graduate.

Simply making these systems work better will help us with retention.

On the employee front, we're also working to improve systems and do better. Starting this year, we are responding to the findings of the Great Colleges to Work For survey many of you completed last spring.

We heard the results—that there was a lot of opportunity for improvement. The HR team has taken the lead in developing plans for operational changes. Eight recent employee focus groups identified action plans to address areas like onboarding, communication and collaboration, and performance management. We plan to finalize and roll out plans for top priorities soon. Because we know that satisfaction and retention among employees matters, too.

So that's where we are. Now let's ask: What comes next? I said at the start of my remarks that I believe this is a pivotal moment for our University, and here is why. First, supporting wellbeing and supporting retention will help us to create the foundation that we can build our future on. But, second, this is the year that many of the big plans we've been talking about for some time are finally coming into focus.

The big story here in New York City is real estate. To be a successful university, we must provide the modern, desirable, future-oriented learning and living spaces that our students, staff, and faculty demand. We started working toward that goal about a decade ago, when we invested \$120 million in the Master Plan transformation of the Pleasantville Campus that brought us two new residence halls, an expanded student center, and state-of-the-art new athletics facilities.

The next step was the renovations of the west side of One Pace Plaza, where almost exactly three years ago we cut the ribbon on the new lobby and the bright and open Student Center I'm standing in today. At the same time, we renovated three floors of 41 Park Row for Dyson College. Since then, we rebuilt the upper floors of this building for the Lubin School of Business and we've been hard at work on improvements in 161 William Street, which is also the home for the College of Health Professions and the School of Education. And there's more work to come at 41 Park Row.

This fall, we'll open our brand-new building at 15 Beekman Street. That's going to be a remarkable new space and another center for our New York City campus. It will include a residence hall with almost 500 beds in modern, suite-style arrangements. There will be a new dining commons. A new library. The Learning Center. And a full set of state-of-the-art classrooms and faculty, study, and collaboration spaces, including a new home for the Seidenberg School of Computer Science and Information Systems.

It is going to be a major step forward for Pace—a state-of-the-art, attractive, energy-efficient building that students, faculty, and staff will be excited to spend time in.

But it's also just one step. Because once we move into 15 Beekman, the next project begins: the wholesale transformation of the east side of One Pace Plaza, including a brand-new performing arts center. As we announced in December, we will be moving nearly everything that's currently in that building over to 15 Beekman, and then we will be shutting it down for an overhaul. Maria's Tower will be renovated into a modern residence hall. The lower floors of the building will include new common spaces, new learning spaces, and a new arts center that will serve our performing and creative arts programs, the full Pace Community, and our neighboring communities.

It's been a long process to get to a plan for this new building that all stakeholders are happy with. But we've done it. And I'm both impressed by and grateful to the faculty from Dyson College and Ibi Yolas and her team at Capital Projects, who have worked so productively together to get us to this point. Once this project is done, in early 2026, we will have fully updated One Pace Plaza into a modern and future-oriented flagship in New York City. It will be energy-efficient, fully accessible, compliant with all current and upcoming construction codes, and ready for the next fifty years.

We also will have added about 150,000 square feet of academic space in New York City while reducing administrative space, thanks to efficiencies enabled by hybrid work, by more than 25,000 square feet. In fact, at the same time we're building these new buildings, we closed the Midtown Center, exited 110 William Street and 156 William Street, and are consolidating some Westchester operations at Haub Law—even as we sold off some unused buildings there.

And we have already secured \$25 million in state funding for the One Pace Plaza project, thanks to Gov. Kathy Hochul and the legislature, and another \$5 million in federal funding, thanks to Sen. Chuck Schumer.

I am also excited that we'll soon be able to announce a very significant philanthropic gift that will help fund this work from a donor who wants to support not just our physical space but is fully committed to our entire ambitious strategic plan. We'll have more on that very soon.

**I** want to be very clear: These new buildings are important, but they are just one part of what's ahead for us, the necessary infrastructure that will support our people and programs. The strategic plan we adopted nearly two years ago identified five strategic priorities for the University: To be a leader in experiential education. To invest in scholarly and creative work. To commit to a student-centered culture. To commit to being an anti-racist institution. And to operate in an agile and sustainable manner.

All the efforts I've talked about today will expand our commitment to a student-centered culture, contribute to our scholarly and creative work, and ensure we can operate in an agile and sustainable manner.

In this academic year, we have expanded our commitment to anti-racism by introducing the requirement that all undergraduates complete two courses designated as anti-racism education. It means that we're now ensuring our students are exposed to coursework that helps them understand systems and practices of racism to better grapple with historical events, societal structures, and unique experiences. It also helps them understand each other better—which will better equip them for the world they'll encounter upon graduation.



This year we renewed our commitment to experiential education by appointing Professor Kelly Kreitz as director of experiential learning and the Pace Path. She is leading the charge to more fully integrate the Pace Path across our full undergraduate experience, with the goal that every student will complete two experiential activities before graduation.

We continue to expand our investment in new and innovative academic exploration, especially interdisciplinary programs and hybrid and online offerings. This year we launched the Pace Entrepreneurship Studio, a trailblazing initiative in the Lubin School that enables select Pace startup teams to gain immediate access to the expertise of VC mentors as they try to take their concepts to market. It's a competitive process, where only the strongest ideas are accepted into the program, but we've already got three student startups accepted into the studio.

For the record, as this moves forward, this pipeline is open to any Pace affiliate—student, alumni, employee—with a great startup idea.

In Pleasantville last fall, we opened a major expansion and upgrade of CHP's simulation labs, enabling us to continue to train students for high-demand healthcare fields on state-of-the-art equipment. And in Pleasantville next fall we plan to open Seidenberg's new Cyber Range, a secure, state-of-the-art simulation lab, in which cybersecurity students can practice defending IT infrastructure against the latest threats. Also in the fall we'll be launching a fully online master's of science in health informatics, an interdisciplinary collaboration between CHP and Seidenberg to serve another high-growth area. And we're at work on a hybrid master's of public health program, a collaboration between CHP and Dyson, which we hope will be approved for launch in Fall 2024.

These are just part of our growing ambitions in online and continuing education. Enrollment in all Pace Online programs is up to 870 students, with 240 new online students enrolled this year alone.

We're extending and expanding the Lubin partnership with EY to offer the online master's in taxation to their employees, and we're opening an Online Learning Center in Pleasantville to provide faculty there—and at Haub Law, too—the digital production capabilities we brought to the New York City Campus a year and a half ago.

At Haub Law, where we remain the No. 1-ranked environmental law program in the country, we're leaning even further into serving our community. The law school has long been the home to important organizations like the Pace Women's Justice Center, the Food and Farm Business Law Clinic, and the Immigration Justice Clinic, where students gain hands-on experience while also serving the broader community. This fall, we also launched the Legal Hand Call-In Center, which provides free legal information, assistance, and referrals to community members, staffed by Haub Law students. We also launched the Sustainable Business Law Hub, expanding the law school's environmental focus by making ESG a significant new priority.

We're breaking new ground in academic research. Last fall, when Avrom Caplan and his team totaled the grants won in the previous fiscal year, we saw that total funding was up another 10 percent—with total grant submission up 22 percent and number of grants won up almost 50 percent from the prior year.

So far, this fiscal year, Pace faculty and staff have won major grants including a new \$400,000 grant to Dyson Prof. Nancy Krucher for research on breast cancer therapies, another \$600,000 for our BA in Writing for Diversity and Equity in Theater and Media, and an additional \$500,000 for the Pace Women's Justice Center.

Just this week we learned that Seidenberg Prof. Zhan Zhang won \$500,000 in a highly prestigious NSF Career Award, Pace's first ever, for his work on wearable technologies.

And across the University, we're continuing to build partnerships and connections. In one wonderful example, the school district in Miami, Florida, found online videos created by our School of Education to help substitute teachers learn to manage classrooms, and they reached out to us for help. Instructional experts at SOE partnered with production and performance faculty and students in Dyson College to create resources that are helping that city's school system address its teacher shortage.

I'm also especially excited about opportunities to continue to grow our pipeline for international students. American degrees have always been valuable, and that clearly remains the case. We've long welcomed students from China, and we have built thriving partnerships

with a range of Indian universities for various dual-degree and feeder programs. We're just launching a new partnership with City University London that will serve students at both our institutions. A series of introductions recently brokered by Mexico's consul general in New York is set to yield several new partnerships, including at Dyson, Lubin, Seidenberg, and Haub Law. And our Pace International office is developing a new database of international relationships and expertise among faculty and staff at Pace, so we can better leverage connections and research interests to take quick advantage of opportunities.

And, on top of everything else, we also raised more money last year than we ever have before, excluding the year of the Haub gift for the law school. Thanks to the efforts of Gary Laermer and his team, each of the last two years has set a fund-raising record, and I am confident that this year will be even better.

**T**hat is an exhaustive list of activities and accomplishments, I know. But the ultimate point is simple. We are doing a lot. We are making a difference. Because the truth is this: The work we do here matters. The work we do changes lives.

Phyllis Mooney recently shared with me the latest numbers from Career Services, and they are remarkable.

The data are still being finalized, but for the Class of 2022 we're on track to report that 93 percent of bachelor's graduates are employed, continuing education, or in military service at six months after graduation—and that 97 percent of master's graduates are. And last year, our employment rates were more than 10 percentage points above national averages. Starting salaries are tracking to average about \$67,000 annually for bachelor's graduates and nearly \$82,000 for master's graduates—again, well above national averages.

No one delivers outcomes like we do. No one.

Look at it this way: More than 30 percent of our undergraduates are from low-income families eligible for Pell grants, which typically means a family that earns no more than \$60,000 per year. Our average graduate, right out of Pace, earns \$67,000 per year.

We're not just transforming lives. We're transforming families. About 40 percent of our incoming students are the first in their families to attend college. And we know those degrees will pay off.

We need to do even more to get our message out. We need to spread the story of our success. We're already doing that. And we are seeing results.

We've been running brand campaigns. You've seen our banners around our campuses—and maybe you've seen the ads in the train stations and even in Times Square or heard them on some of your favorite podcasts.

We're working to boost our rankings. Just a few weeks ago, we learned that we have eight programs in this year's US News Best Online Programs rankings—and five in the Top 50 for their fields.

That's all good news. We need to keep it going.

Our strategic plan is helping. The new buildings will help. The new programs will help. The research successes, the fundraising successes, the outcomes successes, all of it will help.

**S**o, finally, let me say thank you, to all of you, for everything that you are doing to make Pace even stronger. Thank you to our committed faculty and staff, for your hard work and dedication. Thank you to our board for its wisdom and to our deans and vice presidents for your leadership. Thank you to the friends, donors, and elected leaders who are supporting us. And thank you to our students—for your commitment and example, for inspiring us every day.

The world is changing, and we are moving forward. We are changing, and we are making a difference. Together, we will continue to deliver on our historic mission of *Opportunitas*.

Let's do this.