

PACE UNIVERSITY

STATE OF THE UNIVERSITY 2021

Pace Forward

Wednesday, February 10, 2021

Colleagues, students, friends—when we met for the State of the University one year ago, I outlined an optimistic future for Pace. We'd been working hard, rethinking how we did things, and getting ready to charge ahead. I announced 15 Beekman, our new tower in lower Manhattan. I talked about our Pleasantville Plan, to build a sustainable model for that campus. I outlined the powerful new vision for the Elisabeth Haub School of Law, under the leadership of Dean Horace Anderson.

And then, just weeks later, the pandemic arrived and upended all our plans.

Like everyone else, we were forced to quickly shift to remote life. Students had to leave residence halls. Faculty had to learn to teach remotely. Staff had to scramble to keep the University running. It was a remarkable effort, and I commend everyone who moved so quickly and adapted so well—especially those essential workers who kept coming to our campuses every day. The effort and commitment from everyone has been extraordinary.

But, still, it has been a hard year. Hard for all of us as individuals. Hard for our country and our world. And hard for Pace University as an institution.

Yet in spite of that—in fact because of all of that—I stand here today just as optimistic about our future as I was a year ago, if not more so.

Because what I've seen through this year of pandemic—and what I think we've all seen—is that the state of Pace University is very, very strong.

Why do I say that?

For three reasons. Because of our people. Because of the new plans we're developing. And because of our renewed and redoubled commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion—a commitment that is and will be built into everything we do.

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First, our people.

I've always known that the people of Pace are tough—ambitious, hard-working, dedicated, and resilient. This year, perhaps more than any other, we proved it.

We didn't give up. We didn't give in. Some members of our community dealt with truly terrible situations—sickness, lost work, loneliness, even the loss of loved ones. We mourned the losses, we supported each other—and, most important, we kept working to meet our goals.

Faculty, you had to pivot in the space of days to entirely new ways of teaching. You were there to support your students, who were going through their own challenges. And you did that while dealing with enormous new obligations in your own lives. You've shown your commitment to Pace and to our students. Thank you.

Staff and administrators, you kept this University operating. Members of our COVID-19 Task Force have been meeting nearly every morning for close to a year to make the decisions that guide our response to pandemic. People in Residential Life, in Advising, in Student Accounts, in so many other offices have gone above and beyond to keep our students engaged and on track. Health and Safety, and Security, and Facilities, and Ed Media, and the people who pick up mail and deposit checks and deliver care packages—you have all kept doing their important jobs, on campus and in-person. To everyone who did the work to keep Pace up and running, thank you.

Most important, our students. You know the importance of working toward your degree, and you kept at it. Some of you did it from home instead of on campus. Some of you couldn't learn from home and found other work and study spaces.

Some of you faced barriers to travel, some of you faced financial hardship, some of you tested positive and had to be isolated. But you kept working, and you kept learning. Thank you for your commitment to your education.

Finally, to our trustees who guided us wisely, to the engaged alumni who maintained their support and friendship, to the senior leadership who confronted each new challenge, to the

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indefatigable members of FROG—and I think you'll always be the fall reopening group, no matter what season it is—to everyone at Pace: thank you.

The second reason I'm optimistic is because of the plans we're developing.

We are all ready to move forward, past this pandemic. But we also know the world has changed in the last year. We have changed. Higher education has changed. And that means Pace must change.

Right now, we are building an ambitious new strategic plan to do that.

At its base, the strategic planning process we are engaged in—led by our Strategic Planning Steering Committee, involving stakeholders from across our University, and assisted by our partners at the Boston Consulting Group—is an effort to take a fresh look at what we do and how we do it. Our goal is to shift our focus to the world around us, to respond to what students are looking for and what employers need from graduates, and to recognize changing patterns and align ourselves to best respond to them.

That has always been what we do. Pace gives our hard-working, ambitious students the tools they need to succeed in the world—in their careers and in their lives.

What we need to do now is understand our changing marketplace, respond to today's demands from students and from employers, and embrace the profound changes in higher education over the past year. Demographic changes are accelerating. Online and remote education is a reality. There is more and more demand for flexible and customizable options, for giving students what they need when they need it in the way they want it.

That is Pace's heritage. It's our mission. We have always been focused on meeting the real needs of our students. Now we must make the hard decisions that will let us focus our effort and investment on where and how we can best keep doing that.

The research we've done is clear. Pace's mission of *Opportunitas* is strong and powerful. We create opportunities for our students, and we do it for all of our students, regardless of where they come from, who their parents are, or how much money they have. Our mission is

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distinctive in the market, and it resonates. We must do what is necessary to keep that mission alive.

The good news is that the challenges of the past year demonstrate that we can do this. We can change how we work. We can react to new realities. We can work together, and we can make sure that our University continues to thrive. You've heard a lot about the strategic planning process from the chairs of the Steering Committee, Vice President Jean Gallagher and Professor Matt Marcello, and from many others involved with the process. You know that we've analyzed data, and you know that we're now looking to our community to figure out our important next steps. This will be a multiyear process, and it will be an iterative one. It is important, so we need to get right.

Right now we're building the school- and college-based teams that will drive this work, working within our governance structures and the structures of each school or college. Talk to your leadership and get involved.

We want to hear from everyone. Adjunct faculty, we want you involved. Students, and administrative staff, we want you to be involved, too. The right time for your involvement might be now, or it might be in another phase down the road. The Steering Committee includes representatives of the faculty councils, the administrative staff councils, and the school and college faculty councils, as well as student representatives. Talk to them—they're all listed at the [Strategic Plan website](#). Find out how you can help.

What I know is that as a result of this work, we are going to end up with a plan for a Pace that leverages all we've accomplished in the last year. Our four- and six-year graduation rates reached new highs with our recent graduating class, and we will continue to drive up our graduation rates, our retention rates, and our reputation.

We will build a Pace that is strong and vibrant, forward-thinking and community-minded, and able to do what we've always done—prepare our students to solve the problems of the world.

Finally, I'm optimistic about the future of Pace because I know that we're building a University where everyone is included, where everyone is valued, and where we recognize the unique talents and contributions of everyone in our community.

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Throughout the last year we witnessed—rather, we continued to witness—unarmed Black Americans killed by police officers. Ahmaud Arbery was shot and killed while out for a jog. Breonna Taylor was shot and killed while asleep in her apartment. We watched on video as the life was snuffed out of George Floyd by a police officer driving his knee into Floyd's neck.

Just ten years ago, this heartbreaking reality came to Pace, too. Our student DJ Henry was killed by a Pleasantville police officer while out with his friends after a Homecoming football game.

This summer, our nation was shocked into action. Protests against police brutality sprung up across the country, by some counts the largest protests in our nation's history. We all became aware—more aware—of the systemic racism that lingers in our society.

We became aware that we need to do better.

At Pace, we made a commitment to become a truly anti-racist institution. And we are today deeply committed to transforming our institutional climate and establishing practices to support the change we want to see. We established a Presidential Task Force on Diversity and Inclusion, which is still at work. It has submitted some initial recommendations, including a move toward clear and universally used language around these issues, so that we all know what we mean and mean what we say. The Task Force gave us guidance on our approach to annual awareness education for all community members. And I look forward to additional recommendations to come.

We are establishing partnerships with organizations including the National Urban League, the NAACP, and the National Council for Faculty Development in Diversity. This will help us to be a workplace of choice, committed to the full development and well-being of all of our students, faculty, and staff.

We have completed a campus Climate Survey. And later this month, Chief Diversity Officer Tiffany Hamilton will engage the community in a campus conversation to discuss the findings of that survey, and the work in progress, as we work to achieve our commitments to inclusion, access, justice and diversity.

We will integrate findings of that Climate Survey—and the full recommendations of the Task Force—into the strategic planning process. This will ensure that this crucial work is built into everything we do, not an isolated project siloed from the rest of what we do as a University.

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To make sure we live up to that commitment, I'm very pleased to announce a major new initiative today. Thanks to the tremendous generosity of Trustee Barry Gosin, we will immediately be launching the Barry M. and Jackie Gosin Center for Equity and Inclusion at Pace University.

This Center will serve as a hub for our work on diversity, equity, and inclusion. The goals of the Gosin Center include developing new courses that advance our DEI priorities and developing meaningful new programming, research projects, and partnerships to be administered by the Center. We will increase retention and graduation rates for students of color and increase scholarships available and awarded to students of color. We will help to diversify our faculty through increased hiring of BIPOC scholars. And, true to Pace's mission of *Opportunitas*, the Gosin Center will work to increase participation by students of color in our entrepreneurship programs and increase job placement rates and starting salaries for students of color.

These are ambitious goals. But they match our ambitions in this essential effort.

There is much work ahead. But this is a start.

We're committed to doing what is both right and necessary. And I know that we will.

Today is about moving Pace forward. But I also want to spend some time talking about where we've been. I know it can feel like life has been on pause for eleven months. But the truth is that we've accomplished a tremendous amount in the past year.

Colleges and universities nationwide suffered significant enrollment drops and budget shortfalls because of the pandemic. But thanks to our committed students, our dedicated faculty and staff, and responsible management of our resources, we're in pretty good shape.

Enrollment is down, just a bit, but nowhere near the 20 percent decline experts were forecasting. In fact, we've seen a number of new students who deferred their acceptance for the fall semester choose to enroll this spring. That has given us the biggest group of new spring-semester first-year students we've seen in at least 14 years, and probably a lot longer.

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Housing revenue, on the other hand, has been less good. But because we were responsible about managing costs in anticipation of that downturn—in ways I know were hard for our staff and faculty—our budget is in far better shape than we anticipated.

Last spring, we graduated 2,224 students—undergraduates, graduate students, and at Haub Law—despite the pandemic, in a series of virtual ceremonies that were very well-received by students and their families.

Over the summer, nearly 2,200 new students went through virtual Orientation. And close to 700 faculty members signed up for training to learn how to maximize the possibilities of virtual instruction, rather than simply delivering the same classroom experience via Zoom.

When we came back for the fall, 308 students from states beyond the metro area quarantined for 14 days in hotel rooms, and when we came back for the spring, 342 did it again.

In the fall semester, we processed nearly 10,000 COVID-19 tests through our community testing program. So far this spring, we've processed another 5,000 and counting. When we had to quarantine Alumni Hall in Pleasantville because of several positive cases there, students followed the rules and did what they had to. And when we later had to quarantine Dannat Hall at Haub Law, students there did the same.

In fact, one of my favorite observations on the year came from Emily Teixeira, a writer for *The Pace Chronicle* who was living in Alumni Hall and reported for the paper from inside the quarantine. She wrote: “While sitting in my dorm all day is not *the* college experience, it is still *a* college experience. Being here is still *something*.” That is the Pace spirit.

We hosted 224,714 Pace Zoom meetings since March of last year, with participants connecting from 168 countries and logging a total of 131,879,669 meeting minutes.

We ordered and distributed 228 gallons of hand sanitizer, installed 2,965 new air filters, went through 610 canisters of disinfecting wipes, and—I kid you not—posted 2 million square feet of new directional signage.

And, as we always do, we looked out for each other. Through the 2019–2020 academic year, our Pace Cares fund, which provides emergency assistance to students in urgent need, awarded \$621,000 to 890 students, helping them pay rent, buy food, or cover tuition in the

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face of lost income. We were able to give so much because so many donated to Pace Cares—administrators, faculty, staff, alumni, and friends.

When in-person activities were canceled last spring, the New York City and Pleasantville student government associations voted to redirect unused student fees to Pace Cares, because they wanted to help those who needed it most.

In fact, I want to tell a quick story of a Pace student who went that extra mile. Hundreds of students, faculty, and alumni at the College of Health Professions raced to the front lines when the pandemic hit, helping to care for COVID patients. One nursing student—Dana Umbro, who graduated in December and takes her RN exam next month—found another way to help. She and a high school friend co-founded Code Frontline and delivered thousands of care packages, with personal hygiene items and healthy snacks, to overburdened frontline heroes.

That's just one story. But I know people all across our University went to extraordinary lengths to help others, to support family, and even just to continue their education. They all, like Dana, deserve our admiration and appreciation.

Finally, through all this, I can't ignore all of the wonderful, perfectly normal things we successfully accomplished at Pace this year.

Faculty won grants. Students won awards. Residential Life and Housing staff I think have barely slept, tending to their own pandemic challenges while taking such good care of so many of our students.

Our student athletes were forced to stop competing during the pandemic, but the Athletics staff has been an invaluable resource across the University, assisting with health measures and testing initiatives.

The Enrollment Management team took on each new challenge before them. They worked to bring international students safely back to campus despite travel restrictions and visa issues. They helped new students find their way to Pace even without high school visits or campus tours.

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At the end of October, we hosted our first Social Justice Week of programming, in honor of DJ Henry's memory. A group of students, faculty, staff, and alumni organized more than four dozen events across our three campuses, in what will be an annual series that will educate and empower all of us.

Two dynamic new deans joined us mid-pandemic. Tresmaine Grimes is bringing new vision and leadership to Dyson College and the School of Education. Larry Singleton is ably steering the Lubin School through a rapidly changing time for business education. We're thrilled to have both of them here at Pace.

Led by Mary Baglivo and her team in University Relations, we launched this terrific new brand platform and identity. We now have a fresh and forward-looking new face to show the world. A new and up-to-date website is coming this spring, and new marketing materials and advertising are on their way

The Elisabeth Haub School of Law is firing on all cylinders. Enrollment is way up, and applications for next year are trending even higher. They've maintained their reputation as one of the world's leading centers for environmental law. And in this tumultuous year they've rededicated themselves to their social justice mission.

We know distance education is going to be a key part of our future, and enrollment in our fully online programs is approaching 400 students, including 93 students in new programs launched last fall. The online MBA in Lubin has been a big success, enrolling 65 new students, more than twice our target. By the end of the summer, we think we'll have 100.

The Pace Online team has more than a dozen new programs in development. And as part of our latest One Pace Plaza renovations, we'll create a new digital media workspace where faculty can collaborate with instructional-design and digital-media experts to build high-quality digital learning experiences. That is part of the overhaul of the fourth, fifth, and sixth floors of One Pace Plaza West that we were forced to reschedule from last summer.

The work is getting underway now, with construction starting March 1. And it will provide brand-new spaces for Lubin, new classrooms outfitted with the latest technology, and a new home for the Entrepreneurship Lab. We moved the Psychology Department and McShane Counseling Center to a new home at 52 Broadway, and we're building new offices for the Dyson Publishing Program in 163 William Street. A new space for The Actors Studio Drama School in 41 Park Row will be ready by early March.

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I'm very happy to say that we're moving ahead as planned with the new building at 15 Beekman. Our development partners at SL Green are building us a new tower that will essentially replace the east side of One Pace Plaza.

We'll have a modern residence hall, a new library, state-of-the-art classrooms and community space, an up-to-date dining facility, and a new home for the Seidenberg School. It will be ready for Fall semester, 2023.

And at the same time, we're also shrinking our real estate footprint, to make sure we're smart about how we're spending money. We closed the Midtown Center. We're consolidating leases downtown. And we're rethinking space use at Haub Law.

Finally, I can report some really extraordinary news from our Office of Development and Alumni Relations. This could have been a rough year for fundraising. Money was tight for everyone.

We were forced to cancel our annual headline events. But Gary Laermer and his team, working together with partners across the University, managed to produce some remarkable results. In the last fiscal year, about half of it during the pandemic, we managed to raise nearly as much as the previous year—and more than the year before that. That included \$6 million last year for student scholarships.

In the past year, we brought in major new donors. The Andrew Mellon Foundation is supporting our new Storytelling for Equity and Inclusion Fellowship. The Edmond de Rothschild Foundation is supporting our new Assistant Deanship for Diversity and Equity in the Arts. Trustee Barry Gosin made his transformative donation for the Gosin Center. And Trustee Rob Sands, via his family foundation and together with his company, made a substantial donation to the Food and Beverage Law Clinic at Haub Law.

We also launched the New York Resilience Internships this year. This is a funded internship program that ensures our students have access to essential career prep opportunities even through the pandemic, while at the same time aiding the community organizations that are helping our region to rebuild. We raised \$350,000 to support those internships over the summer, with another \$225,000 already committed for forthcoming spring internships. So far, we have supported 70 students with Resilience Internships.

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These fundraising commitments are of course good news because they help support what we do. But they're also good news because they show that our donors—our trustees, our partners, our friends—believe in our mission and believe in our work. These donors, like me, see a bright future for this University.

The bottom line today is that, as tough as things might seem, we're in a very good place.

Across the country, and certainly here at Pace, we're through the worst. Positivity rates, which exploded through the winter, are on a steep decline. Vaccines are here, and capacity is expanding. We fully expect the Fall 2021 semester will look pretty close to a normal fall semester.

As our region and country rebuild, higher education will be critical. What we do makes a difference. We provide the ideas, the talent, and the people who change the world and move us forward. This last year has taught us to be creative, to experiment, to make things work when we need to make them work.

In 1962, President John F. Kennedy promised to send Americans to the moon not because it was easy, he said, but because it was hard. Because it was a goal that would, quote, "serve to organize and measure the best of our energies and skills."

This last year was hard. It has brought out the best of our energies and skills. Now it is time for our moonshot: To come through this last year not weakened but stronger. To value our people and lift everyone up. To join together, focus our energies, and build a Pace for the next century.

We will do it. Together, we will move Pace forward.

Thank you.