

**House Appropriations Committee
March 24, 2015 – 9:30 a.m.**

**Opening Statement by Valerie I. Harrison, Ph.D.
Acting President, Lincoln University**

Good morning Chairman Adolph and members of the House Appropriations Committee. Thank you for this opportunity to present a brief opening statement in support of Lincoln University's 2015-16 operating budget request.

As set forth in the written testimony that was submitted to you previously, Lincoln continues to serve the underserved. While many of our students are very high achieving with strong family and community support, Lincoln is still committed to providing educational opportunities to students who might not otherwise have the opportunity. Approximately half of our students come from families with an annual household income that is less than \$50,000 and roughly half are first generation college students. Today, I would like to highlight three ways in which Lincoln is vital to the welfare of the Commonwealth.

First, even in the face of significant cuts to our allocation, Lincoln has worked very hard to ensure that a Lincoln education is affordable. We have done this by (1) containing operating costs and (2) limiting student debt. Our cost containment measures have included employee layoffs, reducing non-union administrative staff salaries by 2%, outsourcing the physical plant operations, and other initiatives like energy conservation programs. We have done this while maintaining a balanced budget since the 2012-13 fiscal year.

The university has taken very significant and specific steps to limit student college debt. On February 8, 2014, Lincoln's administration recommended to its board of trustees that the university freeze tuition for all incoming freshman for their first four years. That

recommendation was accepted, and this upcoming fall, students who began as freshman in 2014 will continue to pay the 2014 rate for the next three years. Notably, tuition for incoming freshman in 2015 will be increased by only 2.5%. They too will continue to pay that rate for four years. We believe that the four year guarantee, coupled with our financial literacy curriculum, will motivate students to graduate in four years, a further step toward limiting student debt.

Second, Lincoln is preparing students for a college experience in a way that maximizes success. For example, a challenge -- and an opportunity -- for institutions of higher education is to find creative ways to respond to the unfortunate reality that many K-12 public schools do not have the financial resources to adequately prepare their students for college. As you know, many public high schools have no labs, no basic supplies, and no assistant principals and counselors, leaving principals to cover tasks associated with discipline and counseling. And African-American students disproportionately attend these under-resourced schools. This issue is significant because it gets to the heart of a major cause of poverty and other quality of life issues, particularly for African Americans. Studies continue to confirm that higher levels of education result in a greater likelihood that an individual will be employed, and individuals with higher levels of education generally get higher paying jobs than individuals with less education.

Colleges and universities are finding creative ways to stand in the gap. For example, they are developing dual enrollment programs with local school districts. High school students are taught by university professors, have access to university labs and facilities, and can earn both advanced high school and college credit. Lincoln has developed programs with both the Coatesville and Philadelphia school districts. It is our hope that these programs will produce a pipeline to college and reduce the need for remediation or developmental courses once a student is enrolled in college, which of course adds to the total cost of college. Lincoln also has

combined its developmental courses, where possible, to minimize the cost to its students. Further, the university has added more academic support resources like tutoring and a one stop shop operation to address the needs of students requiring some level of remediation.

Finally, Lincoln is a major contributor to the economies of Chester County and the Commonwealth. Lincoln is among the top 30 largest employers in the county; there are more than 5,000 Lincoln alumni residing in Pennsylvania; Lincoln spends more than \$11 million in Pennsylvania; and the university supports more than 500 Pennsylvania businesses.

As you can see, Lincoln remains dedicated to providing effective educational opportunities to all of the citizens of the Commonwealth, even those who may not have access to other institutions. And our efforts are working. Our first to second year retention rate of more than 70% places us ahead of our peers nationally. Our graduation rate places us with our peers and among the top graduation rates among HBCUs.

In closing, the university previously submitted to you a detailed budget request that will enable us to continue this great and very necessary work. However, we do recognize the difficult task before you. Lincoln has made every effort to respond aggressively to keep tuition affordable for its already vulnerable population, and we urge you to join us in that effort and, at a minimum, support a restorative budget that would get us back to our 2009 appropriation level.

Thank you.