

Thank you Mr. Chairman.

It is a pleasure to be back here before the House Appropriations Committee to discuss the Commonwealth Appropriation, which is a vital element in helping a Temple education stay affordable for thousands of Pennsylvanians.

I would also be remiss if I didn't not acknowledge the fact that Governor Wolf, in his first budget address, emphasized the Commonwealth's role in sharing in the cost of higher education so that we can remain affordable. I realize the governor's plan has raised concerns, but I also hope we can agree that affordability is an essential part of the commitment we share.

Along those lines, I would like to take a few minutes to discuss an issue that I often hear when talking with students and their parents about the costs of higher education in Pennsylvania: They want to know how Temple can help them keep their costs as low as possible.

Our first focus is on tuition. Over the last three years, Temple has held base tuition increases to an average of 2.4 percent.

We intend to control tuition increases in the future.

The second step is one that's often overlooked, but just as vital: We need to help students hold down amount of stifling debt they take on through college loans.

There are a growing number of studies which show that students who graduate in four years have a much lower amount of debt than those who extend their college experience to five or more years.

When I ask students why they need more than four years, they tell me they have to work more than 10 hours to pay for their college costs.

In fact, if they focused their efforts on limiting the hours of outside work and graduating in four years, their debt would be lower in the long term.

Last fall, Temple instituted a new program called Fly in Four. The idea was simple.

Temple offers advising that focuses students on graduating in four years, classes when they are needed, and we alert students if they show signs of going off track.

In return, students agree to register for classes early, limit the hours they work outside of the classroom, and stay on course.

If, at the end of four years, the students have done everything they should and have not earned enough credits to graduate, Temple will pay for the remaining courses.

For the neediest students, we also offer \$4,000 annual grants, so those students can focus less on working and more on finishing their degrees.

Our goal was to get 75 percent of this year's entering class to register for Fly in Four. We were amazed when nearly 90 percent of the entering students signed up for Fly in Four. That's a higher registration rate than any other comparable university program in the country.

That initial success is promising. I look forward to reporting on our progress in future years.

We believe that Fly in Four coupled with controlling tuition increases are a powerful combination for helping Pennsylvania students and families make their education dreams an affordable reality. There are other initiatives at Temple to help educate our students on budgeting and money management that I would be happy to discuss in more detail.

Before I close I wanted to just say a word about Temple University Health. As you know, the Temple health system has grown in recent years, with the merger with Fox Chase Cancer Center. We have reinvigorated our lung transplant program, opened a new heart and vascular unit, our expertise in dermatology is growing and there are other improvements on the drawing board. We now offer some of the best medical care in the region, and we make that care available to thousands of Pennsylvanians.

At the same time, we continue to be committed to the treatment of the some of the most challenging and underserved communities in the state. Frankly, these Pennsylvania residents have nowhere else to turn for their medical needs. Temple is committed to giving them the finest care available, despite the cost to our system.

Those are my opening remarks.

I look forward to our conversation.