

Good Morning, I am Mia Swales from Lock Haven University and it is truly a beautiful life, and I am so incredibly blessed to be here. I thank you all for your time and consideration today.

I want to start by saying that I would not be here if it weren't for Lock Haven University and Pennsylvania's State System of Higher Education. I am a Student Trustee and Graduate Assistant in the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Office at Lock Haven University. Both of these roles allow me to look at the best interests of the students and the University. I am an out-of-state student that came to Pennsylvania for a change of scenery and a different experience. April 9, 2016, I stepped foot on Lock Haven's snowy campus for the first time - - and Lock Haven picked me. I truly fell in love with Lock Haven University. I never thought that this new home of mine would bring me comfort and joy, but The Haven did, and does daily.

Lock Haven University has evolved since my arrival. Likewise through being invited to chairs at tables of opportunities my university has provided, my experiences have also transformed. Lock Haven has wrapped me in its warm, loving arms and empowered me with the belief and the want to be successful. When I think of the proposed integration with Bloomsburg, Lock Haven, and Mansfield – I think of all the additional tables and chairs that will provide the opportunity for each student, staff, and faculty member to grow, flourish, and connect. Through each integration meeting that I was involved in, it was obvious to me that the chemistry that developed between all parties would make every chemist smile.

Presidents Hanna and Patterson have genuinely considered everything that the student representatives have said – they both want to know what we value for the greater good, and they listened. They have reassured us that without students there are no institutions, and asked what was important to us? We will now continue to not only keep our campus identities, but also our own individual SGA's. We brought forward that students wanted raw facts and truth and now we get weekly integration insights, along with periodic town halls. All of that is because we were not only heard, but listened to as well.

Bloomsburg, Lock Haven, and Mansfield have all ensured transparency and maintained a student-centered approach. It is no secret that change is hard and it will take some time and effort to adjust. But I look at it like this— for a flower to sprout and a butterfly to flutter they have to go push through a period of unknown – some sort of crystallization occurs allowing them to blossom and shine on.

The demographics at each campus is different, but I would like to highlight that at Lock Haven University 11.6 percent of the student body is from under-represented populations. Only 15.6 percent of the faculty and 10 percent of the staff are from minority groups.

It is easy to put together the pieces and realize that for most students with diverse backgrounds it is impactful to connect with someone that looks like them – I, too, know this to be true.

Integration will allow not just minority students to connect with other people from other backgrounds and beliefs, but it will also allow everyone to connect with people that are similar and different from them. Integration promises to provide opportunities for students to broaden their horizons and learn from not only one another, but other faculty and staff who may provide unique opportunities to learn in a different manner or environment.

Integration will allow students at each of the three campuses to experience the campus life and academia at the other two integrated institutions as well. In being able to intermingle between the other two institutions, there will be open opportunity for success and connection. With connection comes more learning; with more learning comes immense growth. PASSHE plants seeds within its students and creates strong roots, that along with water and fertilization comes opportunity and great success. With successful PASSHE students comes more life -- a better life, allowing generational curses to be broken and creating more compassion, more empathy, and more love – in this life.

With the attributes from the three institutions comes a great deal of unity that can persevere through anything. As we all know, eagles soar higher than any other bird and have incredible vision. Mountaineers through patience and discipline bravely trek through the hills and the valleys. And Huskies are hard-working, strong and wise. All three are known to persevere through challenges in their way.

I believe that, by coming together, we can be successful. Yet we will and must maintain our history and identity – but it's about time we spread the wealth of our individual institution's attributes amongst the Commonwealth.

Thank you for listening to me. Be well, and remain steadfast in your decisions with great faith to invest in the future of our current students and future generations of learners, all while maintaining the integrity of our System's institutions.