1. Melinda Stearns: Alumni; Current Student - Submitted written comment
Topic: Proposed Operating Budgets for Fiscal Year Beginning July 1; 2025; with Corresponding Tuition; Fees; and Housing and Food Charges

Dear Members of the Penn State Board of Trustees,

I am a Community Board member of WPSU representing the State College area and as an alumnus of the University. Please consider the ramifications of the planned fiscal cuts to WPSU as you review future financial planning for the University. While WPSU fully understands and appreciates the fiscal difficulties that the University is facing, the 20% cut in the University’s support—the second highest cut across the institution—has already placed a significant burden on the service that WPSU provides. More cuts would be very difficult to manage.

As many of you likely appreciate both WPSU radio and TV for your enjoyment and learning, you may not realize how important this station is to so many in our 29-county coverage area. We are a multi-platform media organization serving via television, radio, mobile and connected devices, the web, in the classroom, and more. For more than 60 years, WPSU has provided a window to the world. As the region’s largest classroom, WPSU-TV is available to all children—including those who can’t attend preschool—and offers educational media that help prepare children for success in school. WPSU-TV is committed to bringing the power of media into the classroom, helping educators engage students in new and different ways, and providing arts and culture in an era where schools have begun to cut more arts education.

While the University has indicated that we are one of the few departments that can generate its own revenue to offset the cuts, it’s unrealistic for WPSU to essentially double its fundraising efforts to meet this challenge. The University has also indicated that additional cuts are planned for future budgets. These cuts will directly affect the quality and quantity of locally-produced features and stories, which is especially important as a news source when local newspapers are disappearing.

As the land-grant university mission evolves in this century, renamed "learning, discovery, and engagement" by the Kellogg Commission, WPSU-TV remains a primary representative for Penn State as it continuously serves a diverse populace with engaging content. Every station ID broadcast by WPSU includes the Penn State shield and/or the statement that we are “an outreach service of Penn State,” closely tying the University to its highly-valued and indispensable public broadcasting benefit that PSU provides to its Central Pa. neighbors.

Please do not consider any further cuts to this important service of the University.
Sincerely,
Melinda M. Stearns
Community Board Member, WPSU
Penn State Alumnus

2. Gregory Petersen: PSU Retiree - Submitted written comment
Topic: Proposed Operating Budgets for Fiscal Year Beginning July 1; 2025; with Corresponding Tuition; Fees; and Housing and Food Charges

The recent round of budget cuts by Penn State’s administration have dealt a significant blow to one of the most utilized services that Penn State offers.

While WPSU understands and appreciates the fiscal difficulties that the University is in, the 20% cut in the University’s support – the second highest cut across the institution – will place a significant burden on the service that WPSU provides. More potential cuts would be very difficult.

The size of the current budget reduction also came as a unwelcome surprise, as the station’s management was told to prepare a budget with 5% less income from the University. Instead, a 20% cut was enacted.

WPSU-TV serves a 29-county rural area in Central Pennsylvania with programming and services of the highest quality, using media to educate, inspire, entertain and express a diversity of perspectives. WPSU empowers individuals to achieve their potential and strengthen the social, democratic, and cultural health of the region.

The three-part mission of the land-grant university originally was described as "teaching, research, and service." It was later renamed "learning, discovery, and engagement" by the Kellogg Commission. Be it “service” or “engagement,” WPSU-TV is a primary example for Penn State as it continuously serves a diverse populace with engaging content.

As the region’s largest classroom, WPSU-TV is available to all children – including those who can’t attend preschool – and offers educational media that help prepare children for success in school. WPSU-TV is committed to bringing the power of media into the classroom - helping educators to engage students in new and different ways.

WPSU-TV offers programming that expands the minds of children, documentaries that open up new worlds, non-commercialized news programs that keep citizens informed on world and local events and cultures, and programs that expose viewers to science and to music, theater, dance and art.

The University indicated that WPSX-TV is one of the few departments that can generate its own revenue to offset the cuts. It’s unrealistic that the station can essentially double its fund-raising efforts to make up the already announced deficit in just phase one.

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broadcasting benefit that PSU provides to its Central Pa. neighbors.

Public broadcasting is an essential part of our community and to the region where Penn State plays an undeniable role in the quality of life. To see that diminished, is very disheartening.

As the chair of the WPSU Board of Representatives, I urge the Board of Trustees to curb any future cuts to the WPSU budget.

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4. Elizabeth Miller Verterano: Alumni - Submitted written comment  
Topic: Beaver Stadium Renovation (cost; plans; naming)

1. Sadly, SUCCESS WITH HONOR has been replaced by SHOW ME THE MONEY. The core value that defined Penn State no longer exists.

2. A welcome center is unnecessary. We are a university, not a convention center. You have the Alumni Center, the President's home, the Bryce Jordan Center, and other buildings you can use to entertain. Had you not sold the NLI and The Penn Stater, they would be available.

3. Leave the seating inside Beaver Stadium as it is. Construct your suites, premium seats, and press box outside the west side of the stadium. There will be less disruption, the devoted fans will still have their seats, you will have your way to raise the money you seek, and you will be adding seats. Having watched a game from the President's Suite, I can assure you that those fans are not yelling and screaming like those around me in the "regular seats," where I as a double season ticketholder sit.

4. What is Plan B if you do not sell the suites and premium seats? If you do as suggested above, you can reconfigure those suites for your "welcome center," classrooms, or other uses.

5. What are your plans for the ALL SPORTS MUSEUM? It should be enlarged to at least 30,000 square feet to accommodate future championships.

6. If it is true that the full board did not have access to all the construction plans, costs, and financing before it voted, "shame on all of you." The vote should have been tabled until everyone had all the necessary information. Then the plans and any suggestions for changes or modifications should have been discussed "in the sunshine." I cannot believe you would spend $700 million on your own businesses with such little forethought and discussion. I believe you cannot finance $700 million without sacrificing educational aspects of the university. You do remember education, do you not? Nor will you keep the cost to $700 million.

7. When are you going to name the field after Coach Joe Paterno? And re-erect his statue and all that went with it outside Beaver Stadium? And include, "THIS IS THE HOUSE THAT JOE BUILT" because it is. Of what are you afraid? I volunteer to write the press release for you and give you pointers on how to manage the media.

8. If the Nabisco Company will commit enough money, will Beaver Stadium become the Nabisco Cracker Stadium? No need to stop there. The Pennsylvania State University could become The Pennsylvania Pre-Pro University.

9. You keep adding football coaches but do not replace professors. Perhaps football should begin subsidizing academics.
10. Are you unanimously committed to purchasing a suite or premium seat to show your confidence in the project? If not, why not?

5. allen soyster: Alumni - Submitted written comment
Topic: Football Stadium

The following letter was published in the Centre Daily Times in late May 2024:

Could PSU Leadership Survive Sharktank?

“Sharktank” is a popular TV show in which entrepreneurs try and convince investors to invest in their projects. The entrepreneurs answer questions about projected revenues and costs. On May 21, PSU leadership made a presentation to our Board asking approval for $700 mil to renovate Beaver Stadium. The bottom-line University projection over the 30-year timeline is $10.39 billion in revenue and $10.35 billion in costs ($40 mil profit). With such a razor-thin difference, one would expect our Trustees to be especially wary of assumptions used for this projection. Not so, the Trustees voted 26 to 2 in favor with only six Trustees asking substantive questions. And even though this is by far the biggest investment decision in PSU history, the Chair attempted to limit the time for Trustee questions to two minutes. Would the Board be more inquisitive if they were personally financing the project ($20 mil/Trustee)? Our PSU leadership would face a far different environment in Sharktank than our “rubber-stamp” Board. Shark questions: Is the University, not football, legally responsible for the bond? Is it just a fortuitous outcome that revenue(barely) exceeds project costs? Given sky-high borrowing costs, would a delay in financing be fiscally prudent? Could football revenues collapse due to another Covid? Could the University ask the state for a $50 mil subsidy while facing a $100 mil annual academic deficit? Shark Kevin O’Leary (“Mr. Wonderful”) would say, with so many uncertainties and miniscule profit, “I am out”.

Al Soyster
Boalsburg, PA

6. Anne Toth: Community Member - Submitted written comment
Topic: Pool Closure at Harrisburg Campus

I just want to express my extreme disappointment about the closing of the pool at the Penn State Harrisburg campus. This pool was a great resource for the community, for lap swimming, water aerobics, and swim lessons for both children and adults. This was in addition to being a source of classes for the university students. Those of us in the community who utilized the pool have not been given much information as to the reasons for the closure, other than costs of upkeep. We have no information as to when, if ever, it will reopen. We were under the belief that the pool was built with the intention of being a resource for the community, not just for the campus students. We just wish someone would look into the situation and see if a solution can be found to allow the pool to reopen.

7. Justin Chiu: Current Student - Submitted written comment
Topic: Concerns

Two things I want to talk about: shutting down underperformed commonwealth campus and imbed performance-based metrics to university leaders.
Penn State should start thinking of shutting down commonwealth campus that are under performed. The concept that “any Pennsylvania residents can reach Penn State education within 30 minutes” sounds great, but in reality, only “rich” Pennsylvania residents can afford the tuition and reach Penn State education within 30 minutes. Moreover, we have had Penn State world
campus, do we really need to have that many campus across Pennsylvania? Even the PA government does not appreciate the existence of the commonwealth campus; otherwise, we should not have any problem of asking funding increase in the past few years. Since there are so many commonwealth campuses, a huge portion of the budget was spent on university leaders and management level people. With the current financial crisis, do we really have that much resources to support all campus? It is definitely a correct direction to merge the leadership level and staff from different campus like what you guys are doing now, but it is still not enough. We are still paying too much to university leaders. For example, we are paying Penn State President $1.8 Million every year, the highest presidential compensation among all of Big10 peers. However, did we perform better than our Big10 peers? Not really, our ranking has declined dramatically from 37th ever since 2014; whereas all of our Big10 peers succeed to maintain at where they were 10 years ago. (Btw, our college ranking was back to 60th in 2023 from 77th in 2022, but there was nothing to do with Penn State improving anything. It was mainly about US news changing their methodology that favored public schools. Our ranking among public schools did not change too much. It was from 31st in 2022 to 29th in 2024) Some might think that the decline in ranking is due to the lack of funding from government. However, we are not the only state that is suffering from the lack of higher education support. And there are so many metrics that US news looks at to rank schools. Besides our presidential compensation is the highest among BIG10, there are so many chancellors in Penn State system from commonwealth campus, putting more stress on our budget. To make things worse, there is no performance-based metric to evaluate our university leaders while all presidents from our Big10 peers have this some metric to evaluate their performance. The school reputation has started to decline, and our Research faculty turnover rate at UP has been increasing. I do not how much it takes to wake you guys up or we might just become an OK school ten years later since you all have not been doing too much to save our academic reputation. Anyway, Pennsylvania does not need that many universities, and Penn state does not need that many campus.

8. Kristen Pueschel: Faculty - Submitted written comment
Topic: Proposed Operating Budgets for Fiscal Year Beginning July 1; 2025; with Corresponding Tuition; Fees; and Housing and Food Charges

I am a teaching professor in math at Penn State New Kensington. My campus has had significant losses from the Voluntary Separation Incentive Program, with 36% of staff and 10% of all our faculty taking it. We have had other losses as well due to retirement and attrition and anticipate a loss of 50% of our staff from December 2023 to December 2024. Our local administration has been given the unfair and challenging task of trying to provide the level of service that our students deserve, with largely reduced staff. They, along with staff and faculty, are working hard to set plans for the fall that fill our holes. Long-term solutions will need to be planned, but the focus is necessarily on preparing for the fall. With the losses of the VSIP, we are already facing the disruption of upcoming budget cuts.

A flawed budget model underpins the budget up for a vote at this Board Meeting. The new budget model dramatically underfunds Commonwealth campuses, threatening their ability to carry out their mission in a way that upholds the Penn State brand, and disproportionately directs state appropriations to programs that serve more out-of-state students.

One distressing feature is that credit hours are weighted by tuition. For 100 actual student credit
hours at NK, the model says that we are only teaching 70. This system punishes us with less funding because of our lower tuition. Lower tuition is critical for our access mission, but it does not translate into lower expenses. We are told that subventions show the value that Penn State places on the Commonwealth campuses – but we have not been shown why a credit hour at New Kensington should be counted as less productive than a credit hour at University Park. It is easy to produce a much rosier funding picture for our campus and the Commonwealth campuses in general, with changes to the budget model, for instance, considering only headcount or weighting all undergraduate student credit hours the same.

Because state appropriations are included in general funds and distributed with these tuition weights, the current model gives more state tax dollars per student to University Park than to Commonwealth campuses, despite the UP student body being only 52% PA residents, compared to 77% PA residents at Commonwealth campuses. Although we advocate in the PA legislature for fair funding, with parity among peers for per student appropriations, when it is time to distribute these appropriations internally, they are not allocated in a per student or fair way. A new budget model is needed, and it should be built with substantial input from all stakeholders.

Please amend the budget so that Commonwealth campuses are funded at the previous year’s level, $383 million. I ask that the Trustees call on the President and CFO to engage the Penn State community in considering other budget models.