

Lehigh University to add up to 1,800 more students



Lehigh University is planning a major expansion that would include 1,000 more undergraduates and up to 800 more full-time graduate students to the Bethlehem school.

By **Jacqueline Palochko and Nicole Radziewich**
Of The Morning Call

SHARE THIS



Lehigh University announces major expansion plan

OCTOBER 25, 2016, 9:39 PM

L **high University**, looking to build on a legacy that began in 1865 in south Bethlehem, on Tuesday unveiled a major expansion plan that would add up to 1,800 students, create a new College of Health and see the construction of a new science and research center.

Lehigh President John Simon said the initiative, dubbed Path to Prominence, will allow Lehigh to stand among the best in higher education for years to come.

"This is an ambitious plan that builds on our historic strengths and honors the core values that have made Lehigh such a special place," Simon said in an announcement.

Under details of the plan, Lehigh would add 1,000 undergraduates and 500 to 800 full-time graduate students over a seven-year period. The school now has 5,080 undergraduates and 1,979 graduate students, according to its website.

In growing enrollment, Lehigh wants to reach more students across the country. By doing that, the university hopes to increase its diversity. Sixty-five percent of Lehigh's students are white and almost 50 percent are from Pennsylvania and New Jersey.

"We'll be recruiting more, but also a little differently," Lehigh Provost Pat Farrell said in an interview.

Farrell said Lehigh also intends to increase its financial aid and scholarships. Lehigh charges \$61,019 for tuition, room and board, and a technology fee but says more than 50 percent of its students receive financial aid. The typical aid package, the website says, is nearly \$40,000.

With more students, Lehigh plans to hire 100 faculty, with a goal of recruiting professors who can bolster its reputation as a research institution. Lehigh has 521 full-time professors of whom 65 percent are tenured.

Lehigh envisions the Path to Prominence will take 10 years to implement. One of the first goals will be establishing a College of Health. Farrell called what would be Lehigh's fifth college a "real opportunity." Health care is an ever-growing field and Farrell said Lehigh plans to add programs to prepare students to be a part of it.

Lehigh also wants to build a new science and research building on the Packer Campus as well as make upgrades to research spaces and facilities across the campus, including Mountaintop. Farrell said a new science building is long overdue. Lehigh also plans to renovate the University Center to make it more modern and functional.

To pay for the plan, Lehigh, which has a \$1.2 billion endowment, will use some of its resources and launch a fundraising campaign.

Simon presented and won approval for his plan from the university's board of trustees early this month — a year after he was formally installed as Lehigh's 14th president. Simon developed the plan after meeting with key constituencies on campus, alumni and trustees.

The expansion plan comes as Lehigh prepares to move administrative officials and its advancement office into two floors of an office building at Third and New Streets. The six-floor building also will be occupied by St. Luke's University Network. Earlier this year, Lehigh moved staff into the Flatiron building at Five Points.

Bethlehem officials welcomed news of Lehigh's expansion.

Mayor Robert Donchez called Lehigh's proposal an "ambitious" one that he applauded.

He noted the success of Farrington Square, a mixed-use building at Asa Drive and West Morton Street that features student housing, a bank and a post office.

Farrell said the introduction of more students will help the city further remake its South Side downtown, which has been on the rebound since Bethlehem Steel closed two decades ago

"We think there's an opportunity to grow in some key areas," Farrell said. "Having more people on Third and Fourth streets will help the businesses."

Roger Hudak, chairman of the South Side Task Force, said institutions such as Lehigh have helped develop the South Side.

"We're not just Bethlehem steelworkers here anymore," he said. "There's a lot more."

Lehigh's announcement comes three months after Lafayette College in Easton revealed plans to grow enrollment by about 400 students to 2,900 in the next six to eight years.

The enrollment growth is part of **Lafayette's plan** to generate more income so it can increase its annual financial aid package from \$43.3 million to \$55 million.

The plan also includes building a new science center, creating housing for 550 beds on McCartney Street, moving 85 employees to the Alpha Building in downtown Easton and adding parking for at least 300 vehicles on Bushkill Drive.

jpalochko@mcall.com

Twitter @Jpalochko

610-820-6613

Copyright © 2017, The Morning Call

This article is related to: [Colleges and Universities](#), [Lehigh University](#), [Financial Aid](#)