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Grady Armao

The Clock, Plymouth State University

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Don of Change- Plymouth State's New President Donald Birx Discusses the Future of PSU

By Grady Arnao: For The Clock

On October 6, 2015



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Don of Change

Plymouth State's New President Donald Birx Discusses the Future of PSU

Grady Arnao

For The Clock

With the new school year starting, changes are already happening all over campus: The HUB, ALLWell North, new faculty, updates to Res Halls, and the biggest class ever at Plymouth State University. PSU also just welcomed a brand new president, Donald Birx, who joined the Plymouth State Family on July 31. The changes happening right now are just the beginning; students should expect to see many more in the coming years. It is a very exciting time to be a part of Plymouth – whether that is as a student, staff, faculty or alumni. The Clock had the wonderful opportunity to sit down with Birx to ask him what he envisions in the future of Plymouth and what he expects from the students.

Birx comes to Plymouth State University from Penn State Behrend and he is excited to be at Plymouth. He's brought with him some great ideas and plans for the student's collective future to build on the great and unique school that is PSU. Within the next year, he will begin to introduce new philosophies and ideas. He plans to pursue the "clustering of majors into groups, exploring the ways that majors interact, and looking at more interdisciplinary programs." This will allow students to work with people from different majors to gain new skills that will make every student more successful.

In 5-7 years, students can expect to see their new academic clusters gain national and international prominence. The way majors and interdisciplinary studies do today but with greater critical mass "Plymouth will move beyond being a 'Regional Comprehensive University.' It will be looked at as a cutting-edge university in key transdisciplinary areas relevant to the new landscape of higher education." Students will see a growing creative community. They will not have to leave the area to find a job because businesses will begin to move closer to the University for the environment and the opportunity to work with the university, its faculty and its staff. Students will work together to create programs that will be known around the world for their reputation, and we will form Plymouth into an open laboratory for ideas that span disciplines and environments.

Birx also wants to work with students to understand what their vision for PSU is – both now and in the future. "This year, you will see a overcrowded residence halls, but that is a sign of a bright future, and we are trying to work with the community to see how we can add more residence halls," said Birx. "We are going to build on Plymouth's unique strengths to design what a university should be like in the 21st century." Students can expect to see more opportunities to work with area companies, and can look forward to working together to build a creative community. Some of this may not be visible to students right away, but they should quickly see more engagement between students and members of the administration to figure out how to make PSU the best place to live, learn, and grow.

Birx plans to engage the student body by walking around and being available as much as possible. "I enjoy walking around and having students stop me to talk to me about questions, issues or just to say hi." said Birx. He will happily attend a meeting of any student group that invites



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him. He is still trying to figure out the best way to be there for the students. At his last school, he worked closely with students by advising them. Birx would like to take time to map out what will work best for the students. He is very interested in the opinions of the student body as a whole, and is working to figure out the best ways to collect them.

Birx expects students to be ready to work hard, study hard, and be open to working together to continue to position PSU as a cutting edge university. He expects the students to have an impact by attending sporting events, joining clubs, and just generally getting involved. "How can we make the most of the location of the university?" He poses this question for everyone to think of a way for us to

get better. He wants to encourage student involvement and interest level in the University in hopes that students will stay on campus as much as they possibly can.

There is so much that is going on and it is a very exciting time to be part of Plymouth State University. Student's should not be afraid to stop Birx when they see him walking around campus to say hi or ask a question.