



# CHEYNEY UNIVERSITY TASK FORCE

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## TASK FORCE REPORT MAY 2017

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# Transforming Cheyney

Cheyney University is the oldest Historically Black University in the United States, having been founded in 1837. It also is the oldest university in Pennsylvania's State System of Higher Education. The Council of Trustees, the Board of Governors, the Office of the Chancellor, and the university leadership are committed to the long-term success of Cheyney, which has served students and the Commonwealth for nearly two centuries. To ensure a strong future, Cheyney is developing a focused mission that will enable it to meet the needs of students today and tomorrow, while ensuring financial and operational sustainability.

In February 2017, the Board of Governors authorized the creation of a task force to lead the development of a new institutional model for Cheyney University. This new model calls for a focused mission that builds on the success of Cheyney's Keystone Honors Academy and other historical strengths, all while ensuring operational and financial sustainability. An advisory group of students, faculty, staff, alumni, elected officials, and others provided input to the task force, which helped shape the new institutional model described within this document.

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This new institutional model is based on transforming Cheyney into 1) a student success-centered university with a more focused academic array, with 2) an applied research institute focusing on race, ethnicity, and social justice in society; centered by 3) strong, permanent leadership.) The Task Force urges that a national search for a permanent president be launched as soon as possible.

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## What does “sustainable” mean?

Student success lies at the heart of every great university. Improving student success is a primary driver for creating a new institutional model for Cheyney University. A commonly accepted measure of a university's success is how many students it graduates. For decades, Cheyney University's graduation rate has been about two-thirds lower than the rest of the State System. Currently, only 7.9% of students graduate in four years, and 17.5% graduate in six years. Cheyney University's students deserve better.

Financial stability also is a fiduciary requirement for every university. The university has been running an operating deficit since fiscal year 2011/12. The State System has used various lines of credit (LOC) currently totaling \$30.5 million, issued from the System Investment Fund, and appropriations anticipation notes, to support operations in order for Cheyney to meet basic cash flow needs. This cash flow problem is due, in part, to the long-standing issues surrounding untimely financial aid drawdowns from the United States Department of Education (ED). The university's placement

on Heightened Cash Monitoring II status by ED in fall 2015, has resulted in even further delays in receiving Title IV student financial aid funds.

The delayed receipt of restricted revenue and continued enrollment declines have resulted in a severe reduction in revenue that has not been matched with a corresponding reduction in expenses, thus continuing a negative cash flow environment. This new model calls for the university to be self-sustaining: expenditures must be closely managed to remain less than the revenue received from state appropriations and generated by the institution. In addition, new revenue streams must be developed.

A *sustainable* Cheyney University will ensure students are prepared to succeed at the university and beyond by creating a dynamic learning community serving both traditional and honors students. The university will provide a rich living and learning environment—encompassing academic, cultural, social, and professional experiences—designed to ensure student success. An important part of sustaining Cheyney’s legacy will be new efforts to engage academic, cultural, political, and economic leaders in the issues surrounding opportunity, mobility, and social and economic justice.

The focus of the university’s efforts will be fostering student success and creating a greater voice in the issues facing underrepresented groups and society. Other non-academic functions (administrative and financial) will be obtained from other universities and organizations to provide effective and efficient services (including but not limited to accounting, procurement, financial aid, human resources, facilities management, information technology, and health and safety). This approach is consistent with national models for smaller institutions, which allows the university to concentrate its efforts on what matters most—teaching and learning.

**Draft Vision Statement:** Cheyney University and its Institute for the Contemporary African-American Experience will provide a rich living and learning environment for motivated students—fostering critical and creative thinking while exploring and addressing contemporary challenges and experiences. It will be recognized as a premier and relevant 21st century HBCU—a leading hub for teaching, learning, and applied research around issues focusing on race, ethnicity, and social justice in society, attentive to the broader impact in our national and international communities.

**Draft Mission Statement:** Building from its historic legacy as America’s first institution of higher learning for African Americans, the mission of Cheyney University and its Institute for the Contemporary African American Experience will be a best-in-class, focused, and relevant academic institution that educates and nurtures visionary leaders and citizens eager for opportunity and passionate about ensuring justice and equality.

## The University

This new institutional model builds on Cheyney’s historic role as a degree-granting institution while focusing its academic array to serve high-performing students, such as those in the Keystone Honors Academy, and other students who show potential and are motivated to succeed at Cheyney. The academic program will also honor Cheyney’s historic role in teacher training/credentialing (emphasis on teaching in an urban environment) while expanding to offer fellowships with a similar emphasis. The purpose is to improve graduation and retention rates, keep tuition and student loan levels low, and raise the national prominence of the institution.

The model requires a focused, integrated set of academic programs (with 10-12 majors) that prepare students for continued scholarship (e.g., graduate school) and meet the workforce demands of Pennsylvania and the broader mid-Atlantic region.

**Enrollment:** Initial emphasis will be on undergraduate education in living/learning environments on Cheyney's historic campus for students who meet the admissions standards as well as those meeting the standards for admission to the Keystone Honors Academy.

**Academic Programs:** Emphasis will be on both academic and student support for persistence, graduation, and success in career, community, and life. The academic programs and offerings will be structured around the following concepts:

- There will be a focused, integrated set of academic programs in four (4) cluster areas. To the extent possible, each cluster will share major and foundation courses. Each cluster will include a focused "First Year Experience" (FYE) course as part of General Education.
- General education will be interdisciplinary, thematic, coherent, and outcomes-based. The same requirements/courses will be provided for all students with concentrated choices (essential to a shared student learning experience).
- There will be clear alignment among the academic programs, general education, and the development of an institute focused on contemporary issues of social and economic justice.
- The curricular experience for students will also include a career and professional roadmap (ePortfolio), cooperative field experiences, and/or internships to ensure real world learning and applied research.
- Study abroad and service learning opportunities will be made available for all students.
- All students will have a culminating experience and/or capstone course, perhaps aligned with a leadership certificate.

Current academic programs and proposed new programs will be guided by (1) student demand, (2) regional workforce needs, (3) faculty capacity, and (4) facility availability. Attention first will be given to ensuring current programs are relevant, then ones that might be reorganized in short order, before turning to developing new programs. In one potential model, as displayed below, the university would use a framework of four clusters, with associated academic majors that share foundation coursework, to develop an academic program array in accordance with campus shared governance practices and in consultation with the Office of the Chancellor. A full evaluation of current program offerings and workforce needs will be undertaken by the Cheyney University and the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education Office of Academic and Student Affairs.

## POTENTIAL ACADEMIC ARRAY FRAMEWORK Cluster Model

CLUSTER 1	CLUSTER 2	CLUSTER 3	CLUSTER 4
<u>Majors</u> • XXXXX • XXXXX  <u>Minors (associated with above majors)</u> • XXXXX • XXXXX	<u>Majors</u> • XXXXX • XXXXX  <u>Minors (associated with above majors)</u> • XXXXX • XXXXX	<u>Majors</u> • XXXXX • XXXXX  <u>Minors (associated with above majors)</u> • XXXXX • XXXXX	<u>Majors</u> • XXXXX • XXXXX  <u>Minors (associated with above majors)</u> • XXXXX • XXXXX
Shared Major and Foundation Courses			
Focused FYE course in each Cluster			

### How do we enhance student success?

Critical to the success of any institution of higher education is the ability to support students so that they persist to graduation and that their academic and other experiences have not only prepared them for success in life and in their career, but also that they have an effective roadmap to their future. Here, Cheyney’s size may be to its advantage.

The new institutional model calls for student success mechanisms such as:

**Block scheduling of general education:** This will allow students to move through their chosen academic programs in “cohorts” in which they support each other—creating a greater sense of accountability and enabling early interventions if a student falls behind.

**FYE Courses:** First Year Experience courses are designed to help students prepare for the transition from high school to college. Students receive additional practice, experience, and knowledge in goal setting, decision-making, leadership training, and career and academic major planning and exploration. Oftentimes, wellness and computer literacy are interwoven into the course.

**Student Success Framework:** Ideally, each cohort of students would have a single point of contact regarding student success during their four years at the university, which would further enhance retention and completion. Student affairs professionals will serve as student success coaches for each student to support them from matriculation through graduation and beyond, in which students emerge from their time at Cheyney with a "career and professional roadmap."

**Intrusive Advising:** Intrusive advising involves intentional and frequent contact with students with the goal of developing a caring and beneficial relationship that leads to increased academic motivation and persistence through to graduation. This also enables quick intervention strategies to be implemented as needed. Academic roadmaps are one such tool used that provide students with a visual picture of term by term sequences of courses as well as basic information about the major.

**Career and Professional Roadmap:** A student will emerge with an ePortfolio to serve as an electronic collection of evidence of his/her learning journey. Evidence will include writing samples, research projects, photos, videos, etc. In addition, the ePortfolio will also have a Career ePortfolio aspect to it. Much like a resume, this is a demonstration of the student's skills, abilities, and achievements as they relate to the type of position the student will be seeking and will be employer focused.

Overseeing academic and student support would be a dean-level position. Assistant deans with specific expertise would be assigned to cohorts/classes of students in the first two years. Presuming a two-year residency requirement for students in the residence halls, these assistant deans also would serve as the professional residence hall staff.

Providing a range of student life experiences—both on campus and off campus—will be vitally important to Cheyney's success. Robust student activities should be coordinated within the context of the living-learning communities on campus and in association with the academic and social interests of students. At Cheyney's size, costly NCAA Division II sports programs are difficult to justify and would be eliminated. However, athletics and recreational opportunities are an important part of campus life, so team/club/intramural sports would provide all students improved campus life options through expanded health, wellness, and recreational facilities. Cheyney's proposed capital project to remodel and construct NCAA athletic venues would be evaluated and potentially modified to enhance student athletic and recreational facilities that benefit all students.

To improve the students' connectivity within the local community, shuttle services can provide Cheyney students with access to nearby towns and boroughs where additional activities, personal services, shopping, restaurants, and entertainment are available, thus enhancing the town/gown relationship.

## The Institute

In alignment with the new vision, the new institutional model leverages Cheyney University's reputation as the nation's first historically black college/university (HBCU) and create an applied research institute concentrating on the study and impact of contemporary issues around race, ethnicity, and diversity in American society—attentive to the broader impact in the national and even international communities.

The Cheyney Institute for the Contemporary African-American Experience would be a catalyst and facilitator in creating networks, fostering communications, and developing and testing solutions to these contemporary issues among individuals, organizations, and communities working beyond the walls of the academic institution.

Establishing an institute that is appropriately staffed<sup>1</sup>, affordable to the university, and capable of developing a reputation of leadership will take time. Initial external funding will be critical to

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<sup>1</sup> Based on a review of other applied research institutes of this scale, it estimated that 5-6 core full-time equivalent employees (e.g. executive director, scholars in residence, development officer, grant writer, administrative assistant) could operate the institute. This would be determined as the institute's purpose and vision are developed and position descriptions are established. Additionally, faculty, staff and graduate students from other universities could serve various in-residence roles for periods of time to support the institute.

“jumpstarting” the potential success and to affirm Cheyney’s entry into more scholarly public discourse surrounding issues of race in America. Engaging the right scholars (visiting and affiliated), business, community, and political leaders; aligning it with academic programs (including general education); and the addressing interests of the broader Cheyney community will take careful planning.

## Other Ways to Expand the Cheyney Legacy

To complement Cheyney University moving to create a public voice on contemporary issues surrounding race, social and economic justice, other opportunities to extend the legacy must emerge. A natural outgrowth for Cheyney University could be to offer camps for middle and high school students designed to prepare students for college, to explore their academic interests, and engage in contemporary issues. Similarly, opportunities for Road Scholar experiences for senior citizens focused around the themes of general education or the work of the Cheyney Institute might exist. Taken together, there would be great opportunities for intergenerational learning. And finally, additional study should be undertaken to understand the capacity for a greater conferencing function once the university is better positioned as a public venue for important societal issues. While some of these might generate revenue, all will help market the university to students and scholars.

## Financial Implications

A sustainable university must balance expenditures with revenues. Ongoing efforts to align academic programs, reorganize the student experience, and outsource business functions will not create a sustainable university unless the institutional model changes. This document outlines the broad concept of a reimagined and sustainable university that can operate with a less expensive cost structure and has the ability to generate revenue.

Immediate attention must be given to align finances, human capital, and facilities with the needs of the new institutional model. Decisions must be made to consolidate facility usage for greater efficiency—including identifying buildings to be taken out of service either temporarily or permanently. Similarly, private fundraising from individuals, businesses, organizations, and foundations must be successful—crafting a thorough and thoughtful case statement based on the opportunity to expand the legacy of the nation’s oldest historically black university in new, exciting ways is essential.

Cheyney’s revenue sources can also be enhanced by improving student recruitment through focusing on a larger geographical area, a more diverse student population, and target marketing the focused academic program array that would be implemented. Building on Cheyney’s historic role as a teacher’s college, the university could explore creating an opportunity for those who desire a teaching experience within urban areas, such as the Philadelphia School District.

Any plan for rebuilding the university brand, however, must also address a number of barriers to success that have been identified through this process, including but not limited to: 1) a need for an updated business model, which this document addresses; 2) the need for meaningful change; 3) poor “customer service;” 4) accreditation issues; and 5) rising costs. In contrast, the new institutional model only will be successful if the university embraces:

- Strong entrepreneurial leadership
- Campus-wide culture around student outcomes

- Academic goals in keeping with 21st century trends
- Revenue-generating initiatives for sustainability
- Ongoing, robust, and actionable stakeholder input
- Targeted student recruitment

Finally, much conversation has surrounded the value of Cheyney University's land and ways in which the asset could be better utilized to produce ongoing revenues for the university. As the property is owned by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, the feasibility of various options (e.g., sale, lease, joint venture development) must be determined before any assumptions can be made about the monetary value and subsequent financial benefit to Cheyney. A full and thorough feasibility study conducted by a creditable third party must be undertaken to provide options for the university. Any potential land transactions cannot be considered as a source of financial support for Cheyney until such a study is completed.

## Next Steps

The university administration—working through local shared governance processes—will operationalize this new model by developing a detailed business and academic plan based on the recommendations outlined in this report. The plan must include (at a minimum) an updated academic array, organizational chart, facilities plan, and a multi-year operational budget for the university and the institute.

Following the Board of Governors' acceptance of this report, the presidential search process will commence in July, including the development of a presidential job description that is reflective of this new institutional model. As per Board Policy 1983-13-A, the Chancellor—after consultation with the chairperson of the university's council of trustees—will initiate the process in accord with applicable laws, policies, and principles.