

Conversations About Higher Education

Dear Colleagues,

As I mentioned in my message of the first week of classes, to help strengthen connections in the Lehigh community, I would like to organize some informal, in-person conversations around current topics in higher education for faculty and staff. I don't intend for the conversations to be specifically Lehigh-focused, but rather I hope that we will discuss how universities are contributing to and being shaped by what's happening in our country and the world.

In addition to strengthening our community and helping us to better [make the future of Lehigh together](#). I want to have these conversations because I enjoy talking about higher education and I hope that others do as well. Sometimes an interesting conversation starts with an observation—for example, the majority of college students in the US attend a college that [admits more than than 70% of its applicants](#). This is an important fact about higher education in the US and it's also surprising to many people. Other times, conversations about higher education start with a [novel perspective or proposal](#) or from something in our own experience in teaching or research.

I care deeply about higher education and the impact that we have on students and on the world. I believe that more education, more training, more research and more understanding [are needed in our society](#)—all things that universities like Lehigh can and should provide. While higher education is facing significant challenges, I believe that universities and a college education are more important now than at any time in history. I think that it's important for us as a university community to talk with each other on issues like these.

I have identified some dates, times and locations for the first of these conversations:

September 19th at Noon. Location TBD - ASA Packer Campus

October 20th at 8AM. Location TBD

I have no idea of how many people will be interested in joining, so I would ask you to [RSVP for the September 19th conversation if possible](#) so we don't end up in a room that's too big or too small.

For the first conversation I would like to talk about the value of higher education for individuals and for communities/society. Some articles that might serve as background for this discussion are at the top of [this google doc](#). The document also contains links to articles on education that may serve as a starting point for future discussions. If you plan to attend on the 19th, try to read at least one of the linked articles - such as [this one](#) that came out this week. I am interested in suggestions for topics for future discussions.

To make time for these conversations and in the spirit of making decisions to stop doing some things, I will not be holding open "office hours" this semester. I look forward to seeing some of you on September 19th.

Best,
Nathan