

Dr. Robert M. Pignatello

Dr. Robert M. Pignatello has provided effective and innovative leadership as a senior executive in higher education for over two decades. He has applied his extensive experience in resource management, strategic planning, shared governance, employee engagement, evidence-based decision making, intergovernmental, alumni, media and community relations, relationship building, and communications that led to transformational change for the advancement of institutional mission and objectives while improving the student experience and their success. A strong proponent of the transformative power of public higher education, he is the proud son of immigrant parents.

Most recently as President of Lock Haven University in North Central Pennsylvania, he focused on strategic enrollment and retention and under his leadership the university increased enrollment for the first time in seven years and increased retention by 8% in two years. He created the Office of Student Success to coordinate services related to improving outcomes and fostering a holistic student experience; developed a strategic plan to improve student mental health and well-being; established the University's first Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, and focused the institution on closing the achievement gap; made access and affordability a priority by increasing tuition aid and establishing a Student Retention Fund to mitigate financial barriers.

He mobilized planning to expand existing associate degrees and establish LHU as a regional leader for adult learning and workforce development; expanded its associate degree in nursing; set up plans to grow service at its branch campus which is focused on adult learners; expanded experiential learning; established new pathways with the local school district in STEM disciplines; and brought renewed attention to partnerships with other institutions such as through the University's pre professional degree. He created an Advancement Office to coordinate, lead and improve marketing, fundraising and stakeholder relations and work on local economic development issues, institutional branding, donor cultivation, and raising LHU's profile. He improved both internal and external communications; created an employee engagement program, improved shared governance and fostered better engagement with students, faculty, staff, and alumni.

He is an experienced crisis leader having led institutional responses in times of crisis in New York City as VP/Chief Operating officer at CUNY's John Jay College of Criminal Justice, a large diverse, Hispanic Serving Institution where he also was an adjunct instructor, and Hunter College, becoming widely recognized as a thought leader along the way. His implementation of a virtual text book store reduced the cost of books for students and became a CUNY system model.

As President, Dr. Pignatello ably led LHU through the current COVID-19 pandemic overseeing changes in instructional delivery, teleworking and mitigation strategies which helped to keep the infection rate under control and created a safer environment for students, faculty and staff.

In collaboration with the Board of Governors, Chancellor and other system University presidents of the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PASSHE) he was involved in efforts to

strengthen system sustainability through university integration, sharing of both administrative and academic programs and providing greater value, access and opportunity for students.

As the Pennsylvania State System pursues and advances the consolidation of its smaller universities he is currently serving as Senior Advisor to the Chancellor for System Integration Strategy.

Outside of his higher education experience, Dr. Pignatello has also served as a local council member, deputy mayor, and mayor and worked as a legislative assistant in the New Jersey State Senate.

Dr. Pignatello holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in political science and public administration from Montclair State University, a Master of Public Administration degree from Rutgers University Graduate School, and a Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) in Educational Leadership - Higher Education from Saint Peter's University.

Recreationally, Dr. Pignatello enjoys singing and songwriting, playing guitar and he is an avid baseball fan. He and his wife Amy are fond of walking, cycling, traveling, cooking, and gardening.