Dear Members of the Campus Community,

Earlier this month, the Lehigh Board of Trustees formally endorsed our plan to create and launch a new College of Health. This exciting new initiative, a key pillar in our Path to Prominence plan, will open up vast opportunities for Lehigh to improve human health through strategic investment at intersections of unmet need and opportunity.

Our approach in building this College is not to replicate what already exists elsewhere, but rather to define a distinct path that takes full advantage of Lehigh's strengths in interdisciplinary and entrepreneurial approaches to research and education. Thanks to the work of our faculty and staff and our continued consultation with outside experts, we have identified two areas of focus around which we will build a truly impactful nexus for teaching, research and innovation in healthcare.

**Innovation in Value-based Healthcare**

Value-based health care focuses on improved health outcomes for individuals and populations and incentivizes high-quality, affordable health care delivery. Value-based approaches are growing in the industry, with some estimates claiming that 75 percent of all health care reimbursements will have value-based components by 2025. Successful expansion of value-based approaches requires the integration and alignment of multiple perspectives—patient, provider, payer, policymaker—and more coordinated, accessible and personalized health care delivery. Our students and faculty can contribute to stronger healthcare systems through their work to improve the effectiveness, accuracy and efficiency of value-based health care delivery systems, drawing upon interdisciplinary approaches that span the analytic to the synthetic, from community culture and ethics to digital health at a personal scale.

**Biological and Social Determinants of Health**

Health and well-being is influenced by numerous complex factors, from molecular genetics to the strength of our families and communities. Current estimates are that 40 percent of deaths from leading causes are preventable, and there is growing recognition that promoting health—or, put another way, eliminating poor health—requires mindful focus on the interplay between the biological and social factors that impact health and create health disparities. Our students and faculty can contribute to better health through interdisciplinary approaches that integrate study of the interplay of health determinants ranging from genetic and environmental factors to social factors including behaviors, family and community characteristics and economics.

These focus areas require both foundational and specific expertise. The intelligent use of data to
measure and inform progress toward better health is central to progress in both focus areas, as is an underlying knowledge of health ethics. For undergraduates studying in our College of Health, courses might include biostatistics, health ethics, data analytics and health economics, among others. Other foundational curricular elements of the College will be more specific to each focus area. For example, students interested in specializing in the study of biological determinants of health would be directed to develop a strong background in biology.

This new College will not exist in isolation. Internal partnership will be critical in its development, and our focus areas offer broad opportunity for cross-college collaboration. We will continue to explore the important question of how to best invest both inside and outside the College to ensure maximum benefit to the entire university, as well as to our goal of advancing health.

External collaboration with a diverse set of academic, industry, nonprofit and government institutions will also be critical to our success, and we are currently working to identify key strategic partners for our efforts. For example, potential partnerships with healthcare providers and payers could offer important test beds for new ideas, while agreements with other universities may enable us to develop a series of +1 and +2 graduate programs, including programs linked to clinical settings.

We look forward to sharing more information about our continued progress in planning for the College with the entire campus community. Updates about this and other major university initiatives can be found at the newly launched Path to Prominence portal and the Provost's website. Additionally, we recently announced the March 28 College of Health town hall, where we will talk about progress and next steps. You may also share your thoughts through our dedicated College of Health email address.

We thank you for your continued support at this exciting time for Lehigh.

Regards,
Patrick V. Farrell
Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs