

# Allegheny eliminates 36 positions, cites financial and enrollment challenges

Roman Hladio, Editor-in-Chief | July 28, 2021

Allegheny College announced on July 27 that 36 administrative and staff positions will be eliminated.

A prepared statement provided by the college explained that this comes as a reaction to increasing financial and enrollment challenges, which were exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. It elaborated that of the 36 positions to be removed, 24 are those of current employees while the other 12 are vacant positions which will not be filled.



“By doing this we’re preparing ourselves better than a lot of other institutions because we know that we’ve gotten a little bit smaller and there are fewer high school students,” said Vice President for Enrollment Management Ellen Johnson. “So what we’re doing is really to set ourselves up for a strong financial future; to ensure that we are balancing the workforce with our students — which is the piece that I think we were a little out of balance, as our student enrollments were down a little bit.”

According to the statement, the goal of these eliminations is to relieve financial strain and move the college toward President Hilary Link’s goals of holistic student success and inclusive excellence, embracing the College’s unique, multi-disciplinary academic brand, engagement with the College’s local and global social contexts and financial stability.

The eliminations occurred between July 28 and 29.

“It was across all divisions of the college,” Johnson said. “When we talk about staff and administration on campus, it’s really anyone who is not a teaching faculty member ... So that is from administrative assistants through senior administration levels. So whether that’s non-teaching people in academics, admission and financial marketing to student life, all of those pieces all kind of fit into staffing.”

Johnson stated that the college will not disclose the identity of any of the separated individuals. She also addressed concerns amid the community that the eliminated staff

members received no warning prior to their separation.

“When separations like this occur — when there’s a reduction in the workforce — this is typically the manner in which it’s done,” Johnson said. “That being said — and we share this with employees as well — employees who were separated from the institution were provided severance packages as well as an extension of their benefits that the college is contributing toward for six months. So while they were not given advance notice, they were provided different financial pieces as a part of their separation.”

According to Johnson, few students should be immediately affected by the eliminations.

“Students may notice staff that they have worked with or interacted with in the past have left,” Johnson said. “That also could be staff who’ve left for their own choices as well over the summer.”

She elaborated that the duties of the eliminated positions will be absorbed and redistributed throughout their respective departments as the department best sees fit.

Despite the student experience remaining relatively unaffected for the time being, Johnson explained that teaching faculty will begin a year-long review process in the fall which could result in faculty position eliminations.

While positions are being removed, the college is planning to continue adding staff to areas they see fit.

“We really made an effort to ensure that our focus on academic success and student experience would not be negatively affected in this approach,” Johnson said. “So the class deans and the learning commons and that sort of area ... we’re investing in some new positions there. So hopefully students will actually experience more resources for their learning and support while they’re on campus.”

Johnson explained that the eliminated positions and the installation of class deans have no direct correlation, but acknowledged that they are part of a similar theme in the college’s restructuring.

“The class deans are just one piece of a larger restructuring really focused on the student experience and making it a more holistic or cohesive experience for students,” Johnson said. “While there might be some positions that students work with that were eliminated, with these new positions created, we’re really creating a structure to provide students more opportunity to engage with people throughout their time here that are connected across campus. This is a cliché way of saying it, but breaking down silos. Instead of having lots of individual places students have to go for things, having more of that one-stop place and single points of contact for students.”

According to Johnson, the college hopes that the restructuring of staff provides more opportunities for both the institution’s financial success and for the recruiting, retention and graduation of students.

“This structure that we’re putting in place did mean some really hard decisions about current

Allegheny eliminates 36 positions, cites financial and enrollment challenges – The Campus positions that were eliminated,” Johnson said. “But really it was through that lens of ensuring our students are having a great experience and are successful while they’re here.”

COVID-19 eliminations Ellen Johnson Hilary Link

### About the Writer



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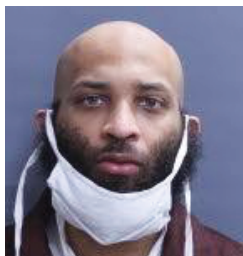
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The student news site of Allegheny College