Dover, DE – Delaware State University and Wesley College have signed a Definitive Agreement for Delaware State University’s acquisition of Wesley College no later than June 30, 2021. The University will initially look to enhance its existing 129-year-old system of higher education to include the Wesley College affiliate. In addition to its status as a comprehensive research institution with 104 undergraduate, master’s and doctoral degree programs, the University’s portfolio already includes the Early College High School and the Early Childhood Laboratory School.

“Despite so much uncertainty on many fronts nationally, this is a unique opportunity for the University and the State of Delaware. The time for bold innovation for young people is now, particularly for students who have made it to college by sheer determination against sometimes enormous odds,” said Delaware State University President Tony Allen. “Acquiring a college like Wesley, which serves a very similar student base, boasts strong academic programs, and brings sustained economic impact to Downtown Dover and Kent County, is a significant step closer to our broader vision -- a substantively diverse, contemporary and unapologetically Historically Black College or University (HBCU).”

An outspoken advocate for expanded educational opportunities and redefining the higher education business model, Wesley President Bob Clark stated, “When this Definitive Agreement is fully executed over the next year, it will revolutionize our State’s educational landscape. Wesley College is proud to join Delaware State University, and we are excited about the expanded educational opportunities our two campuses will provide.”

Recognizing the historic significance of this Agreement, Dr. Harry Williams, CEO of the Thurgood Marshall College Fund and former President of Delaware State University, said, “This is an unprecedented landmark in the long history of HBCUs. No HBCU has ever acquired a non-HBCU institution before, but I am not surprised that Delaware State University is leading the way.”

During the past few years, Wesley College, faced with the increasing pressures on small, private liberal arts colleges, has considered several options to continue its 147-year tradition of providing high-quality education for its students and contributing to downtown Dover’s economic and cultural life. As a close partner in several mutual initiatives, Delaware State University has followed Wesley’s efforts closely.

Important synergies between the two institutions make this acquisition highly desirable for Delaware State University. The University has long noted a strategic need to have a greater downtown presence in Dover. Incorporating the Wesley campus would allow for expanded academic offerings, enhance facilities capacity for both campuses, and support the University in responsible growth and expansion.

Wesley’s academic programs complement those at Delaware State University; both institutions hold similar educational accreditations and have excellent career placement rates for graduates. As a

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1 This designation is subject to approval of a Complex, Substantive Change by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE).
Minority-Serving Institution (MSI), Wesley shares a similar student demographic profile and mission to provide greater educational access to students from traditionally underserved communities. Wesley serves 63% students of color, with an average entering Grade Point Average of 3.05 and average SAT scores of 905, compared to Delaware State University’s 91% minority students, average GPA of 3.15, and average SATs of 920.

This Agreement represents the culmination of a series of discussions begun by the leadership of both institutions in March 2020. The Agreement outlines that before the acquisition is finalized, multiple contingencies must be completed. The highlights include the following:

- Delaware State University will need to secure sufficient private and/or government funding resources outside its normal operating revenue to manage the acquisition. No existing revenue in the University’s current budget can be used to support the transaction.

- Acquisition of Wesley College requires approval from appropriate governing and accrediting bodies (i.e. the U.S. Department of Education, Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE)).

- Wesley’s FY 2021 budget, operating expenses, negotiated contracts with vendors, and other obligations will be coordinated with Delaware State University.

- A successful organizational transition plan that serves the needs of all students and ensures the University’s long-term financial stability and growth must be developed.

“It was 27 years ago this month, after years of transformation that so many worked hard to achieve, that Delaware State College became Delaware State University,” said U.S. Senator Tom Carper. “Now, Delaware State University is achieving another milestone by bringing on a well-established Dover institution, Wesley College. I am thrilled that both schools are coming together for the greater good of our students, our Dover community, and our State. Nearly three decades ago as Governor, I supported Delaware State University’s historic milestone, and I will continue my work to support these two great institutions as they come together today.”

U.S. Sen. Senator Chris Coons added, “Delaware State University is one of Delaware’s most cherished and important institutions, and the steps that DSU has taken in recent years to continue to grow and develop into a world-class University have been remarkable. DSU’s acquisition of Wesley College is a fantastic development not only for Wesley and DSU, but for the Dover area and the entire State of Delaware. By building on Wesley’s tradition of excellence, expanding academic programs, growing the student body, and increasing the University’s footprint and capacity, this move solidifies DSU as the premier HBCU in the country.”

“Today is a new day for higher education in Delaware. Wesley College has carved out a critical and unique role in our State’s education landscape over nearly 150 years, combining instruction of hands-on skills with the teaching of interdisciplinary values. With today’s acquisition, Delaware State University and Dr. Tony Allen continue their mission of creating and expanding programs that will
prepare students for the future of our economy,” said U.S. Representative Lisa Blunt Rochester. “Both of these great institutions have served Delaware well in their own right -- but combining their assets, talent, and vision, I’m confident that they will be even stronger. With this move, Delaware State’s students will be better positioned to contribute and compete in an increasingly diverse and interconnected world.”

Both institutions anticipate that the 2020-2021 Academic Year will help them locate and implement fiscal and operational efficiencies, some of which may include shared residence halls, common vendor contract consolidations, elimination of redundant support and administrative function, and more.

Presidents Allen and Clark also emphasized that it is critical for their institutions to work closely together to navigate the changes and challenges inherent in continuing to operate with safety and academic integrity during the COVID-19 pandemic, specifically over the course of the Fall 2020 semester.

Both institutions recognize the significant potential of coming together to form a stronger and more diverse multi-campus university.

Wesley College Board Chairperson William Strickland said, “The Board of Trustees of Wesley College is very excited to join Delaware State University. With the changing landscape of higher education, combining resources and cost efficiencies will likely become imperative for colleges and universities to not only survive, but more importantly, to thrive.”

“This will be a very involved process, but if we are successful, we consider this to be a real opportunity to expand our capacity thoughtfully and responsibly grow in multiple dimensions for years to come,” agreed Dr. Devona Williams, Board Chairperson at Delaware State University.

The institutions will hold a joint virtual press conference at 4:15 p.m. on Thursday, July 9 to announce the formal signing of the Definitive Agreement and provide additional details.