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First Lady Frances Wolf Visits Bloomsburg University to Discuss College Hunger and Affordability

Harrisburg, PA – Today, First Lady Frances Wolf visited Bloomsburg University's Basic Needs Shoppe - a food and basic needs pantry designed to support Bloomsburg students - and joined students and staff for *The Realities of Food Insecurity: A Discussion on Hunger, Policy, and Advocacy*, a panel discussion on college hunger. First Lady Wolf addressed the growing need for resources for students experiencing food and basic needs insecurity and discussed Governor Tom Wolf's proposed \$1 million investment to address college hunger and \$200 million investment to create the Nelly Bly Tuition Program in the 2022-23 state budget.

"Hunger should never be what holds someone back from achieving in higher education," said First Lady Wolf. "By working together to adopt programs like Hunger-Free Campus and the Nelly Bly Tuition Program, we can solve this issue on college campuses."

An estimated 36 percent of students know someone who dropped out of college due to food insecurity during the pandemic. Roughly 52 percent of students who faced food or housing insecurity in 2020 did not apply for support because they did not know how. Bloomsburg University is challenging these statistics with its [Office of Access and Success' Act 101 Program](#). Act 101 provides supports targeting first-generation Bloomsburg University students who are demonstrating risk factors that will increase the likelihood of not completing a four-year college degree. Act 101 serves nearly 300 students.

First Lady Wolf toured the [The Basic Needs Shoppe](#), one of the Act 101 resources, which features items ranging from non-perishable food items to culturally relevant hair care products to winter boots. Instead of presenting students with pre-packaged goods, customers make appointments at the pantry to personally select the items they need.

In addition to the Basic Needs Shoppe, Act 101 provides a host of other services designed to assist students with basic needs like its Professional Clothes Closet, lending libraries for educational materials such as laptops and books, scholarship assistance, information on and help with applying for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and more.

Following the tour, Mrs. Wolf joined students and staff at Monty's Dining Hall for a panel discussion on college hunger. She shared the governor's budget proposals to confront the substantial costs of college and

food insecurity among college students, encouraging the college community to contact their elected officials and urge them to act on the behalf of Pennsylvania's students.

"I want to thank Mrs. Wolf for coming to campus and highlighting this very important issue," said BU President Bashar Hanna. "As a nation, state and community, we need to continue to raise awareness of food insecurity and how prevalent it is on college campuses, including our own."

In his 2022-23 budget, Governor Tom Wolf proposed \$1 million to create the Hunger-Free Campus grant program. This program would help schools set up or expand food pantries, like the Basic Needs Shoppe, increase SNAP outreach and education, improve data gathering on this issue, and support any other project that could meet the needs of hungry students on campus.

Additionally, Governor Wolf proposed \$200 million for the Nellie Bly Tuition Program, a needs-based scholarship that would support equitable access to and enrollment in Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PASSHE) schools and Pennsylvania's community colleges. The scholarship would support student tuition and relevant costs of attendance with a focus on those pursuing programs with high-workforce needs following the pandemic such as healthcare, education, and public service. Students who take advantage of the program must stay in Pennsylvania to live and work for the same number of years which they received the scholarship benefit.

Photos from the First Lady's visit can be found at www.pacast.com.

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