

May 11, 2026

Dear William Penn University Community,

As you learned earlier today, President John Ottosson has informed the Board of Trustees of his decision to retire from William Penn University after the 2026-2027 academic year. While this announcement naturally brings a mix of gratitude and reflection, it is first and foremost an opportunity to recognize and celebrate a presidency marked by courageous leadership, financial discipline, enrollment momentum, and steadfast commitment to students during an extraordinarily challenging period in higher education. William Penn University is much stronger thanks to his tireless leadership.

On behalf of the Board of Trustees, I want to express our deep appreciation to President Ottosson for the remarkable work accomplished during his tenure. These achievements were realized in partnership with highly dedicated faculty, staff, administrators, and supporters who share a deep love for William Penn University and its mission.

President Ottosson assumed leadership at a time when the institution faced significant financial, operational, and strategic challenges. Through disciplined stewardship and bold decision-making, the University consolidated its outstanding debt and reduced it by more than \$14 million, strengthening the University's financial foundation while positioning William Penn for long-term sustainability. Equally significant was the strategic separation from the for-profit partner operating the Adult Learner campus, followed by the thoughtful alignment of academic calendars and course syllabi between adult and traditional programs—creating a more cohesive and unified academic enterprise.

Under President Ottosson's leadership, William Penn University will have invested more than \$22 million in campus infrastructure upon the completion of the Spencer Chapel renovation project. This has addressed long-standing deferred maintenance needs while also enhancing the student experience through major improvements. These investments also included new science laboratories created within underutilized white space, as well as the renovation of a larger residence hall—clear signals of confidence in the University's academic and residential future.

John also played a key role in developing a more sustainable advancement model, grounded in a strong partnership with Musco and focused on broadening the University's base of philanthropic support. This vision strengthened relationships with existing partners while inviting a wider group of supporters to invest in William Penn University's mission.

Academically and programmatically, President Ottosson's tenure expanded opportunities for students and strengthened enrollment pipelines. The addition of a four-year nursing program, two new 3+2 engineering programs in partnership with Iowa State University, six new athletic programs and expansion of participation opportunities in the fine arts significantly broadened access and appeal for prospective students. These efforts propelled William Penn to sustained growth at a time when many peer institutions were experiencing declines, culminating in record enrollment on the Oskaloosa campus.

Perhaps most notably, President Ottosson guided William Penn University through the unprecedented challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic with steadiness and care. The University remained open, protected community health, preserved the student experience, and—remarkably—continued to grow enrollment during this period. Through close collaboration with the conference, robust safety protocols were implemented, and all student-athletes were able to compete successfully.

Throughout his presidency, John Ottosson has demonstrated a deep commitment to students, a clear understanding of institutional realities, and a calm, principled leadership style that earned trust across the University community. The Board is profoundly grateful for his service and for the strong position in which he leaves William Penn University. We also acknowledge the support of John's wife and family that allowed him to remain focused on the needs of the university.

The Board of Trustees has begun succession planning in accordance with established governance practices and will share additional information about the leadership transition and presidential search process in the coming weeks. President Ottosson has expressed his intention to continue leading with the same focus and dedication throughout the transition period, ensuring stability and continuity for the University.

We invite the entire William Penn University community to join the Board in offering thanks for President Ottosson's leadership and in praying for wisdom and discernment as the University prepares for this next chapter.

With gratitude and confidence in the future of William Penn University,



Dr. Eric Nichols
Chair, Board of Trustees
William Penn University