

**Board of Governors appoints interim
president
for Cheyney University of Pennsylvania
*Aaron A. Walton to lead institution beginning May 31***

Harrisburg – The Board of Governors of Pennsylvania’s State System of Higher Education today appointed Aaron A. Walton to serve as interim president of Cheyney University of Pennsylvania, effective today.

Mr. Walton is a former senior vice president of Highmark Inc. and longtime member of both the Board of Governors and California University of Pennsylvania’s Council of Trustees. He will assume the duties of interim president from Frank G. Pogue, who has served in the position since November 2014.

“Cheyney University is in the midst of a major transition toward a new operational model, even as it faces unprecedented challenges to its long-term sustainability. It needs strong leadership now more than ever,” said Board of Governor’s Chair Cynthia K. Shapira. “Aaron has a strong track record of leadership. As a member of both the Board of Governors for more than a decade and of the Council of Trustees at Cal U. for more than 20 years, he understands the enormous challenges facing higher education today, including those uniquely affecting Cheyney. I can think of no one better to serve in this vital role during this period of transition.”

A special task force appointed by the Board of Governors already has approved a “conceptual framework” for a new business model for Cheyney—the nation’s oldest historically black university—including the creation of an “Institute for the Contemporary African-American Experience” within the university. The new interim president will be responsible for leading efforts to develop the final version of that new model, as well as for addressing the university’s challenges moving forward.

“Aaron Walton understands the challenges facing public higher education today,” said State System Chancellor Frank T. Brogan. “He has the knowledge and the leadership skills necessary to lead Cheyney University at this important time in its history. I look forward to working with him as we all seek to ensure the long-term success of the university and its students.”

Mr. Walton is retired from Highmark, where, as senior vice president for corporate affairs, he was one of nine principle officers responsible for providing overall management and direction of all of the organization’s corporate activities. During his 40-year tenure with Highmark, he held progressively higher key management roles in both corporate and subsidiary operations. Additionally, he had oversight of Highmark’s community involvement, foundation and strategic health initiatives and its joint venture affiliate activities, including Gateway Health Plan.

He has served on more than 35 community boards, including for the August Wilson Center, The Pittsburgh Foundation and United Way of Allegheny County. He has been a member of the State System's Board of Governors since 2005, when he was first appointed by Gov. Edward G. Rendell. He was reappointed to a second term on the Board by Gov. Rendell in 2009 and again by Gov. Tom Corbett in 2013. Mr. Walton currently serves as Board vice chair and chair of the Human Resources Committee and previously served as chair of the Academic and Student Affairs Committee.

Mr. Walton is a co-chair of the Cheyney Task Force and was chair of Cal U's Council of Trustees from 1999 to 2003. He resigned from both the Board of Governors and Cal U's Council of Trustees prior to the Board approving him as interim president at Cheyney.

He holds a bachelor's degree in speech pathology and audiology from Cal U and a master's degree in public policy and management from Carnegie Mellon University.

The Board of Governors is responsible for hiring university presidents within the State System. When the need for temporary leadership at a university occurs, the chancellor, after consultation with the chair of the Council of Trustees, makes a recommendation to the Board of Governors, which then meets to ratify the selection. An interim president serves as the university's chief executive officer, with the same responsibilities and authority as a permanent president.

Mr. Walton will serve as interim president at Cheyney until the successful conclusion of a national search for a permanent president. The search is expected to begin this summer.

Pennsylvania's State System of Higher Education is the largest provider of higher education in the Commonwealth, enrolling more than 100,000 degree-seeking students and thousands more in certificate and other career-development programs. Collectively, the 14 universities that comprise the State System offer more than 2,300 degree and certificate programs in more than 530 academic areas. Nearly 520,000 State System university alumni live in Pennsylvania.

The State System universities are Bloomsburg, California, Cheyney, Clarion, East Stroudsburg, Edinboro, Indiana, Kutztown, Lock Haven, Mansfield, Millersville, Shippensburg, Slippery Rock and West Chester Universities of Pennsylvania. The universities also operate branch campuses in Oil City (Clarion), Freeport and Punxsutawney (IUP), and Clearfield (Lock Haven), and offer classes and programs at several regional centers, including the Dixon University Center in Harrisburg and in Center City in Philadelphia.