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Pitt to Participate in City of Pittsburgh Bicentennial Celebration

By Adam Reger

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Beginning this month, the University of Pittsburgh will join the City of Pittsburgh and more than 200 community groups in a yearlong celebration recognizing the 200th anniversary of Pittsburgh's incorporation in 1816.

The University will participate in the bicentennial's kickoff event on March 18, marking the exact date—March 18, 1816—that the City of Pittsburgh's incorporation papers were signed. Mayor William Peduto will preside over festivities at the City-County Building, Downtown, which will include guest speakers, musical performances, and the unveiling of the original City Charter document.



The City of Pittsburgh circa 1892

Pitt representatives will also take part in a July 9 parade through Downtown to Point State Park. The Pittsburgh Bicentennial celebrates the formal incorporation of Pittsburgh as a city—an act that gave its citizens the right to vote, elect representatives, and self-govern.

Pitt, working with the Pittsburgh Council on Higher Education (PCHE), will also produce a video highlighting the contributions of higher education to the region's history.

The theme of the video and other communications will be "frontiers old and new," said Kannu Sahni, director of community relations in Pitt's Office of Community and Governmental Relations.

"Pitt was founded on the old frontier, at what was then the gateway to the West," Sahni said. "Today, the universities and colleges of our region have taken our city to a new frontier, a gateway to the future, through discovery and innovation."

Apart from Pitt's own vast contributions in the humanities, the sciences, health care, and many other areas, the University is a member of a spirited group of universities and colleges that has given the Greater Pittsburgh region a renewed sense of confidence and vitality.

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And Pitt's role in the year of celebration reflects the vital contributions that the city and University have made in one another's histories.

"We are a product of Pittsburgh's proud legacy. And for our community, Pitt's campus does not end in Oakland. Our long-held belief is that the city is our campus," Sahni said.

Mayor Peduto and the Pittsburgh Bicentennial Commission have advised community partners to try to make their individual bicentennial events diverse and relevant to their mission, but collectively representing a broad community celebration.

For example, Pitt and PCHE intend their video to be used in multiple ways, Sahni said, indicating that regional universities and colleges and other stakeholders may use the finished video to showcase the region as a foremost center of academics, research, and innovation. Pitt's Office of Admissions and Financial Aid will produce the video and is also providing social media content to engage the roughly 100,000-strong student audience in PCHE institutions. A longer version of the video might be shown at kiosks in various public venues, including airports, for example.

An additional facet of Pitt's bicentennial participation is to represent Oakland, which has hosted Pitt since the University relocated there in 1909. Oakland organizations will participate in the March 18 community showcase Downtown.

"We want to highlight Oakland as a community that connects with Pittsburgh in many ways and helps drive its success," said Paul Supowitz, Pitt's vice chancellor for community and governmental relations. Supowitz chairs the Oakland Task Force, which has contributed to Oakland's growth as a regional educational, medical, cultural and economic hub.

During the year of festivities, the Oakland community will also mark the 10th anniversary of Schenley Plaza, an oasis of green space converted from a parking lot through the efforts of the entire Oakland community with leadership from Pitt.

Updates and additional information are available at the Pittsburgh Bicentennial website: www.pgh200.com

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