



**Statement before House Education Committee
Subcommittee on Higher Education
Public Hearing**

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Good morning, Chairman Christiana and subcommittee members. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today on the very important topic of “Higher Education Readiness for Career Success.”

Preparing graduates for a lifetime of personal and career success goes to the very core of the missions of the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education universities. As you may or may not be aware, our 14 universities were founded as career-focused institutions; with most being established to train teachers for the schools in their communities and regions.

As they have developed over the years, our universities have retained their focus on preparing graduates to meet the Commonwealth’s needs even as they have greatly expanded their academic offerings. Today, each of the State System universities offers an array of academic programs—from certificates to advanced degrees—designed to meet the needs of public and private employers in the Commonwealth and beyond. Many of these programs were designed hand-in-hand with employers to help meet their very specific educational and workplace needs.

Under the leadership of Chancellor Brogan and our 14 university presidents, the goal is for PASSHE to be the most flexible, collaborative, and student-centered university system in America.

To that end, allow me to cite a few examples of recently approved academic programs or reorganizations of existing academic programs. In every case, they were done in partnership with business/industry in response to the ever-changing workforce needs of PA.

- Bloomsburg, Clarion, Edinboro and West Chester universities all have recently developed new advanced-care nursing programs to address critical health care needs, not only in their individual regions, but also throughout the Commonwealth.
- Bloomsburg University reorganized its computer forensics program to a digital forensics program in response to computing devices broadened beyond computers. Bloomsburg has expanded the scope of this minor to include cell phones, GPS systems, and all other digital communication devices.
- Clarion University has added a natural gas technology specialization to its associate’s degree in industrial technology. This program was developed in partnership with two career centers, the Precision Manufacturing Institute, local employers, and economic development agencies in the region.
- The Marcellus Institute at Mansfield University was created specifically to develop new academic programs focused on the expanding shale gas industry.

- Edinboro University has designed an associate's degree in applied technology specifically for workers in General Electric's apprenticeship program.
- Indiana University of Pennsylvania (IUP) has redesigned a graduate program in chemistry to become a Professional Science Masters (PSM) program in applied industrial chemistry to meet workforce demand in high-technology sectors in the Commonwealth. PSM programs all are designed in close collaboration with industry advisers to ensure graduates of the programs are well prepared for identified careers. Several PASSHE universities have recently developed PSM programs in areas including computer science, integrated scientific applications, and pharmaceutical science.
- IUP also created an 18-credit minor in homeland security for students in any major. The United States Department of Homeland Security aligned twenty-two agencies under a single department with a mission that includes prevention and protection against threats and disasters of all kinds.
- Shippensburg University, responding to the needs of the Volvo Group, realigned existing programs and developed new programs in software and computer engineering, advanced supply chain management and logistics, and international studies. The development of these new programs helped convince Volvo Construction Equipment to expand its facilities in Shippensburg and to move the company's sales headquarters from North Carolina to Pennsylvania.
- Slippery Rock University will begin offering a Doctor of Education in special education designed to prepare graduates to enter special education faculty positions as well as special education leadership positions in the K-12 system or related support service agencies. According to the Pennsylvania Department of Education's Bureau of Special Education, there are nearly 300,000 K-12 students who have been identified with special needs, such as autism, learning disabilities, emotional disturbances, mental health issues, and physical disabilities, who are most often taught in inclusive classrooms in Pennsylvania.
- Most recently, Edinboro University announced a visionary initiative to make workforce-ready degree and certificate programs available at its Porreco College in Erie at community college prices.

These are just a few examples of how State System universities are responding to the Commonwealth's workforce needs. They are success stories.

Can we do more? Absolutely, and we are committed to doing more. But it takes investment; and, in these challenging fiscal times, that investment is becoming increasingly difficult for the universities to make within their operating budgets.

That is why the Board of Governors in October requested along with its base appropriation a separate \$18 million line item that would be used solely to develop new academic programs that would be aligned with current and emerging high-priority occupations across the Commonwealth.

Graduates of these new programs would be equipped with the skills necessary to take advantage of employment opportunities that will allow them to remain in Pennsylvania; hold rewarding and family-sustaining jobs; and contribute to the economic, social, and cultural vitality of their region and the Commonwealth as a whole. These graduates would be prepared to work as biological and biomedical technicians, market researchers, engineering technicians, health care technicians and other health care professionals, computer systems analysts, software developers, and entrepreneurs within the respective industries.

New program development can be expensive, especially in health care and other high-tech and STEM-related fields. But Pennsylvania needs these kinds of programs if it is to rebuild and grow its economy. There can be no better investment in the future of the Commonwealth, or in the future of our students, nearly 90 percent of whom are Pennsylvania residents and the vast majority of whom will stay right here after graduation.

To help ensure the best return on that investment, the State System is conducting a “gap” analysis to identify shortages for selected career opportunities by region and the role State System universities can play in meeting those needs.

Not only are our universities adapting their program offerings to address Pennsylvania’s changing workforce needs, they are taking additional steps to ensure their graduates have access to the best tools available to help them land that all-important first job. As an added service to our students and alumni—including the more than 15,000 new graduates who just received their degrees earlier this month—the State System universities have begun to participate in the state Department of Labor and Industry’s “Job Gateway,” a program designed to connect job seekers with employers.

This program provides an array of online services for both employers and their potential employees. Employers can list their job openings while job seekers can create and post their resume and learn important interviewing skills, which they can then practice by taking part in mock virtual interviews. The site automatically matches employers with potential employees based on information contained in each other’s postings.

We welcome the opportunity to work with you and other members of the General Assembly and the administration to continue to address the issues related to career readiness and workforce development. As Pennsylvania’s public university system, we believe we have a unique role to play in helping to ensure a strong economic future for the Commonwealth.

The 14 State System universities and their leadership willingly accept this challenge. In several of the examples I cited earlier, private industry has shown its willingness to partner with the universities in these efforts as well. Your support in these efforts is vital.

The opportunity is there. Working together, we can assure not only a successful future for our students, but also for Pennsylvania.