

COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

EDUCATION COMMITTEE
PUBLIC HEARING

STATE CAPITOL
HARRISBURG, PA

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WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 2021
10:11 A.M.

BEFORE:

HONORABLE CURT SONNEY, MAJORITY CHAIRMAN
HONORABLE MARK LONGIETTI, MINORITY CHAIRMAN
HONORABLE ROSEMARY BROWN
HONORABLE VALERIE GAYDOS
HONORABLE MARK M. GILLEN
HONORABLE BARBARA GLEIM
HONORABLE DAVID HICKERNELL
HONORABLE JOSHUA KAIL
HONORABLE ANDREW LEWIS
HONORABLE MILOU MACKENZIE
HONORABLE MEGHAN SCHROEDER
HONORABLE CRAIG STAATS
HONORABLE JESSE TOPPER
HONORABLE TIM TWARDZIK
HONORABLE JOE CIRESI
HONORABLE CAROL HILL-EVANS
HONORABLE MARY ISAACSON
HONORABLE SUMMER LEE
HONORABLE NAPOLEON NELSON
HONORABLE MICHAEL ZABEL

Pennsylvania House of Representatives
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

1 COMMITTEE STAFF PRESENT:

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3 REPUBLICAN EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

4 DANIEL GLATFELTER
5 REPUBLICAN RESEARCH ANALYST

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I N D E X

TESTIFIERS

* * *

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PRESIDENT,
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DR. MICHAEL DRISCOLL
PRESIDENT,
INDIANA UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA.....12

DR. BRENDA ALLEN
PRESIDENT,
LINCOLN UNIVERSITY.....15

JOANNE EPPS
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT AND PROVOST,
TEMPLE UNIVERSITY.....19

THOMAS FOLEY
PRESIDENT,
ASSOC. OF INDEPENDENT COLLEGES
AND UNIVERSITIES OF PENNSYLVANIA.....24

SUBMITTED WRITTEN TESTIMONY

* * *

(See submitted written testimony
and handouts online.)

P R O C E E D I N G S

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3 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SONNEY: I call this
4 hearing of the House Education Committee to
5 order. I think we have some of the technical
6 difficulties worked out for the time being. I
7 would like to remind everyone that this hearing
8 is being recorded and live-streamed, so the
9 public may watch. If we experience any technical
10 difficulties, we will recess the hearings until
11 those technical difficulties can be addressed.

12 For the members and testifiers
13 participating virtually, please mute your
14 microphones until it is your turn to speak. For
15 members participating virtually, if you want to
16 be recognized for comments, please use the raised
17 hand function. After being recognized, prior to
18 speaking, please turn on your camera and unmute
19 your microphone. After you've completed your
20 questions, please remember to mute your
21 microphone.

22 Each testifier has been asked to limit
23 their testimony to the Committee to three
24 minutes, so that there will be ample time for
25 questions from the members.

1 So at this time, I would like to do the
2 instruction of members. I think I will start at
3 my right, far right.

4 REPRESENTATIVE STAATS: Good morning,
5 everyone. Craig Staats from the 146th District
6 in Bucks County.

7 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SONNEY: Good morning.
8 I'm Representative Curt Sonney, the Majority
9 Chairman of the House Education Committee and I
10 represent Erie County, 4th Legislative District.

11 MINORITY CHAIRMAN LONGIETTI: Good
12 morning. Mark Longietti. I'm the Minority
13 Chairman of the House Education Committee from
14 Mercer County.

15 REPRESENTATIVE CIRESI: Good morning.
16 Joe Ciresi from the 146th, Montgomery County.

17 REPRESENTATIVE ISAACSON: Good morning.
18 Mary Isaacson, the 175th District, Philadelphia
19 County.

20 REPRESENTATIVE NELSON: Good morning.
21 This is Napoleon Nelson from the 154th
22 Legislative District in Montgomery County.

23 REPRESENTATIVE BROWN: Good morning.
24 Rosemary Brown, 189th District, Monroe and Pike
25 Counties.

1 REPRESENTATIVE GAYDOS: Valerie Gaydos,
2 4th District, Allegheny County.

3 REPRESENTATIVE TWARDZIC: Tim Twardzic,
4 123d District, Schuylkill County.

5 REPRESENTATIVE GILLEN: State
6 Representative Mark Gillen, 128th Legislative
7 District, Berks and Lancaster Counties.

8 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SONNEY: Thank you.

9 We also have members participating
10 virtually. We have Representative Gleim,
11 Chairman Hickernell, Representative Kail,
12 Representative Mackenzie, and Representative
13 Hill-Evans.

14 And are there any other members that are
15 present virtually that I did not name? Hearing
16 none.

17 Today's public hearing is focused on the
18 challenges Pennsylvania institutions of higher
19 education are facing because of the COVID-19
20 pandemic. This morning we will be hearing from
21 representatives of the Pennsylvania State System
22 of Higher Education, our State-related
23 universities, community colleges, and independent
24 colleges and universities.

25 Since the beginning of this pandemic,

1 Pennsylvania's institutions of higher education
2 were forced to quickly adapt to an ever-changing
3 higher education landscape. Colleges and
4 universities across our Commonwealth worked
5 tirelessly to develop the necessary policies and
6 procedures so that they could continue on with
7 their mission of educating our students. While
8 the effects of this pandemic on higher education
9 are not yet known, it is important for the
10 legislature to hear directly from our
11 institutions of higher education now, so that we
12 can begin to work together to mitigate any
13 long-term lasting effects.

14 I'd like to thank all of the testifiers
15 in advance for taking the time to be here with us
16 today and we all look forward to hearing your
17 testimony.

18 Now, Chairman Longietti, do you have any
19 opening remarks?

20 MINORITY CHAIRMAN LONGIETTI: Thank you,
21 Chairman Sonney.

22 Any I first just want to recognize that
23 we've been joined by Representative Mike Zabel
24 who just came into the room.

25 Pennsylvania, we know, has a very rich

1 system of higher education, from our community
2 colleges to our State System of Higher Education,
3 our State-related universities and our
4 independent colleges and universities. And each
5 of them plays a significant role, and we're going
6 to hear from representatives of each today as
7 they outline for us, you know, some of the --
8 some of the known, at this point, effects of
9 COVID-19 on providing that education.

10 And we know that these are
11 extraordinarily challenging times, as Chairman
12 Sonney, indicated. As time goes on, we will get
13 a better picture of some of the effects down the
14 road, but we want to hear at this point. And I'm
15 pleased, Chairman Sonney, that you called this
16 hearing.

17 Thank you.

18 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SONNEY: Thank you.

19 Today we are joined as testifiers Dr.
20 Mark Erickson, President of Northampton Community
21 College; Dr. Michael Driscoll, President of
22 Indiana University of Pennsylvania; Thomas Foley,
23 President of Association of Independent Colleges
24 and Universities of Pennsylvania; Dr. Brenda
25 Allen, President of Lincoln University; JoAnne

1 Epps, Executive Vice President and Provost,
2 Temple University; and Thomas Foley, President of
3 Association of Independent Colleges and
4 Universities of Pennsylvania.

5 I would like to thank all of you for
6 being here with us this morning and I would ask
7 you all if you could please raise your right hand
8 to be sworn.

9 (Whereupon, testifiers were sworn en masse.)

10 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SONNEY: Thank you.

11 President Erickson, you may begin.

12 DR. ERICKSON: Thank you very much.

13 Well, good morning Chairman Sonney and members of
14 the House Education Committee. My name is Mark
15 Erickson. I am in my ninth year as the very
16 proud President of Northampton Community College,
17 actually, my 16th year as a college president. I
18 was the President of Lombard College in Ohio for
19 seven years. Prior to that, I was at Lehigh
20 University for 22 years in six different
21 positions.

22 As I think many of you know, Northampton
23 Community College is located both in the Lehigh
24 Valley and up in Monroe County. We have three
25 locations. We have students who come to us from

1 53 counties, 23 states, and 48 countries. We're
2 uniquely positioned as the only community college
3 that has residence homes. We have a little over
4 25,000 total students, 110 programs of study, and
5 we are the largest and most diverse college in
6 our region. Thirty-six percent of our students
7 are first gen, 44 percent are students of color,
8 and 90 percent stay in our communities.

9 I'm also the vice-chair of the
10 Pennsylvania Commission on Community Colleges,
11 representing the 15 community colleges in the
12 Commonwealth. So I want to thank you for the
13 opportunity to discuss how we delivered education
14 during COVID and continue to do that. And we so
15 appreciate your interest in the community
16 colleges and our important role in the
17 Commonwealth, both in education and in workforce
18 development.

19 We enroll more than a quarter million
20 students across all 67 counties and are the
21 largest provider of post-secondary education in
22 the Commonwealth. You know, these are unique and
23 challenging times for sure. I've been in higher
24 ed for 42 years and I've never seen anything like
25 it, but I believe that now more than ever,

1 community colleges provide what the Commonwealth
2 needs, like stability, agility, affordability,
3 and responsiveness to the communities that we
4 serve.

5 We were able to respond to COVID quickly
6 because of our agility. And we will be a key to
7 the Commonwealth's success as we come out of the
8 COVID crisis into the post-pandemic world,
9 providing educational access, fostering
10 entrepreneurship, stimulating economic
11 development, meeting the workforce needs of our
12 community, re-skilling citizens who are now
13 unemployed, so they can find new jobs and move
14 our communities forward.

15 And we have programs both to put students
16 directly into work, our welding program, our
17 truck driving, line workers, health
18 professionals, but also to go on to great
19 four-year colleges. I'm honored to be here with
20 my colleagues from private and public four-years
21 who are great partners in that journey. I look
22 forward to answering your questions.

23 Thank you very much.

24 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SONNEY: Thank you.

25 I would like to announce that

1 Representative Schroeder has entered the room and
2 joined the meeting.

3 The next testifier will be Dr. Mike
4 Driscoll, president of Indiana University of
5 Pennsylvania.

6 DR. DRISCOLL: Thank you, Chairmen Sonney
7 and Longietti, other members of the House
8 Education Committee.

9 I thank you for this opportunity to
10 discuss how Pennsylvania's State System of Higher
11 Education universities are meeting the needs of
12 more than 93,000 students and supporting their
13 success amid the pandemic. My name is Michael
14 Driscoll and for the past nine years I have had
15 the honor of serving as the President of Indiana
16 University of Pennsylvania. I also represent an
17 outstanding group of university presidents as
18 Chair of the State Systems Commission of
19 Presidents.

20 Today I emphasize three key points with
21 detailed information having been provided in my
22 written testimony. First, the cost of the
23 pandemic is immense: lost revenue, increased
24 expenses, stress, isolation, and opportunities
25 delayed or lost forever will be woven into the

1 fabric of the future of our universities, the
2 communities we serve, our students, our employees
3 and our Commonwealth.

4 Second, our universities have remained
5 resilient while pursuing our missions in the most
6 challenging circumstances we have seen in our
7 lifetimes. While we fundamentally changed our
8 operating models, our faculty, staff, and
9 administrators kept an absolute focus on health
10 and safety and continued to move our students
11 toward their life goals.

12 Third, the demand for mental health,
13 academic, and other support services increased
14 dramatically. Our most disadvantaged students
15 faced the worst challenges, including lack of
16 access to broadband internet, loss of wages from
17 jobs that disappeared, and in some cases food and
18 housing insecurity.

19 I'm proud to say that despite these
20 obstacles, our students demonstrated their true
21 mettle, displaying strong, academic resolve
22 throughout 2020. And I hope that you are as
23 proud of them as I am. My colleagues and I are
24 most appreciative of your strong support over the
25 past year. And I would ask for your continued

1 support in three areas: first, efforts to improve
2 and provide broadband Internet to all
3 Commonwealth residents must remain a high
4 priority. It is the door to education at all
5 levels, and many Pennsylvanians still don't have
6 a key to that door.

7 Second, while the situation seems to be
8 improving, we can use your help in making sure
9 COVID testing and vaccinations are distributed
10 equitably for our students, faculty, and staff.
11 Counties across the Commonwealth are resourced in
12 very different ways at very different levels
13 resulting in significant variation and
14 readability.

15 Third, I thank you and would ask that you
16 please support continued flexibility in
17 deadlines/operations to allow universities and
18 colleges to make decisions to support their
19 students, employees, and communities. One size
20 does not fit all in a landscape as diverse as
21 Pennsylvania. While this is not a budget
22 hearing, I do ask that you encourage and support
23 your colleagues in identifying additional
24 recovery funds as we work to return to a new
25 normal.

1 In closing, thank you again for this
2 opportunity to offer remarks on behalf of IUP, a
3 proud member of the Pennsylvania State System of
4 Higher Education. And I'll be happy to answer
5 any questions that members may have.

6 Thank you.

7 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SONNEY: Thank you.

8 Next will be Dr. Brenda Allen, President
9 of Lincoln University.

10 DR. ALLEN: Good morning. And thank you
11 for allowing us the opportunity to testify before
12 the Pennsylvania House Education Committee. Like
13 most of my colleagues, our primary concern
14 through this pandemic has been to protect the
15 health and safety of our faculty, students, and
16 staff and to really worry about the continuity of
17 education.

18 Also in the beginning, just want to echo
19 the profound gratitude that we have for the
20 support that we've gotten from the State of
21 Pennsylvania, assuring us of our appropriation
22 well before the academic year started. It took a
23 whole lot of stress off the many other factors
24 that we had to consider, not to mention some of
25 the PA CARES Act support, as well as support for

1 testing. So you have been great partners for us
2 and we thank you very much.

3 We are managing through this pandemic.
4 We're getting through. The thing that's really
5 becoming more apparent to me is that while our
6 students are persevering, I'm concerned that they
7 are not thriving. So Lincoln University, a
8 historically black college whose hallmark is
9 face-to-face learning. For the students that we
10 serve, it's more than just courses, but our
11 campus and the surrounding activities that happen
12 on campus are just as important to their
13 development and transformation as the
14 in-classroom experience.

15 And so through this pandemic, although
16 we've been learning to manage how to keep them
17 healthy and safe while on campus, the economic
18 impact that our families are suffering as well as
19 just reticence in our community about this virus,
20 given the disproportionate effect of COVID on
21 communities of color is really -- has really let
22 many of our students to choose to continue to
23 study remote through the rest of this year. We
24 are happy to offer them that option for this
25 year, but I don't believe it's a sustainable

1 model for us.

2 so like I said, while our students are
3 persevering, we hear more and more data about the
4 mental health challenge that individuals are
5 facing because of the isolation. Also know that
6 as our students are trying to get through their
7 courses, not really having access to people in
8 the capitol that exists when they're on campus is
9 really starting to affect all the things that we
10 can do in order to wrap some really important
11 services around it.

12 And so as we move forward, a couple of
13 things are just concerning to me. Number one,
14 the environment looks as if things are getting
15 better, right. So every day, although we are
16 still suffering devastating numbers of death, we
17 also see the vaccine program being rolled out.
18 We also see the numbers and new COVID cases
19 coming down, hospitalizations coming down. All
20 of that is really very positive.

21 I still though believe that it's going to
22 take about another 12 to 18 months to get to some
23 level of normalcy, whatever that's going to look
24 like post-COVID. And we see that, for example,
25 in the number of students who, for example, have

1 elected to take a gap year. So my institution,
2 like most around the nation, are stating to see
3 high school seniors saying they're not going to
4 go to college next year, that they're going to
5 take a year off. So we see about a 35-percent
6 decrease in the number of students who are
7 applying to college.

8 I also think it's going to take a little
9 bit of time for families to regain their economic
10 stability, which also might influence their
11 choices about coming back to school in the coming
12 year. And then finally, especially for the kinds
13 of students we serve within the African-American
14 community and community of color, there's still
15 some reticence about the vaccine itself, given
16 the sort of racial history and things that have
17 happened in the past, helping our communities to
18 gain some confidence about the virus is going to
19 take us a little time, as well.

20 So as I look for it, I'm thinking a
21 couple of things are going to be very important.
22 First of all, it's going to be not just access to
23 the vaccine, but really help with the community,
24 education about its safety and its need. I think
25 we will continue to have costs related to PE,

1 especially testing, until we actually get that
2 community immunity that we think the vaccine will
3 do once a sufficient number of people have that.
4 And then, I think the support that we've been
5 getting to get through some of the budget
6 challenges that we've had because of reduced
7 visitors on our campus and so on, is likely to
8 persist for about another year. So we would
9 really like to partner with the Commonwealth to
10 help us get through this pandemic over the next,
11 I would say, 12 to 18 months.

12 Thank you.

13 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SONNEY: Thank you.

14 I'd like to announce that Representative
15 Lee has joined the meeting virtually.

16 Our next testifier will be JoAnne Epps,
17 the Executive Vice President/Provost of Temple
18 University.

19 Is JoAnne available? We see you. You
20 have to unmute your microphone on the phone -- on
21 your phone.

22 MS. EPPS: Okay. Now?

23 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SONNEY: Yep. We hear
24 you.

25 MS. EPPS: Excellent. Now, can you hear

1 me?

2 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SONNEY: Yes.

3 MS. EPPS: Great. I apologize for that.
4 Thank you so much. I'm used to talking through
5 my laptop, which did not link up this morning.

6 So good morning Chairs Sonney and
7 Longietti. Thank you very much for the
8 opportunity to testify here today and to describe
9 for you and the rest of this Committee how Temple
10 University has responded to the pandemic.

11 I certainly stand with my colleagues who
12 you've heard from already to point out to you
13 that the impact of the pandemic has been
14 substantial in many, many different ways. And I
15 agree with President Allen that I think that the
16 impact of this is going to continue. We're very,
17 very grateful for the Commonwealth's support at
18 this time, and I think you'll hear from all of us
19 in our opening remarks and in responses to
20 questions that we do look forward to continuing
21 to partner with the Commonwealth as we go
22 forward.

23 If I can just briefly talk a little bit
24 about Temple's reaction to this. First of all,
25 let me start with academics. Like everybody

1 else, we went entirely remote last March, but
2 then very quickly tried to bring back the
3 students whose education really depended on
4 in-person opportunities. Those are clinical
5 students, med, medicine, dentistry, podiatric
6 medicine, health, the people that are engaged in
7 hands-on learning. And we were very gratified
8 that the Commonwealth and the city allowed us to
9 bring that group of people back.

10 In the fall, we were encouraged in the
11 beginning to think maybe we could bring more
12 students back, but we were not able to do that
13 for a really long time. So we went back to what
14 we considered to be the courses that most
15 critically required in-person. This spring, we
16 have now again more classes than those that
17 require in-person. We have dedensified our labs
18 and our classroom and that has allowed us to have
19 more students back on campus. But clearly right
20 now, the predominant number of our classes remain
21 online, of course.

22 The things we've done though, many of our
23 schools and colleges are trying to provide co
24 curricular or extracurricular activities to
25 supplement the online experience to make sure

1 that students do continue to feel that they have
2 a connection, not just to the label of the
3 university, but to the essence of the university.
4 And as you've heard, Temple, too, really faced
5 increased needs from our students, and we offered
6 financial, academic, and emotional support during
7 this period of time. In terms of the economic
8 impact -- and I, too, recognize this is not a
9 budgetary hearing -- it was significant for us,
10 though bearable.

11 We reduced budgets. We didn't give any
12 salary increases to the nonunionized employees.
13 Those individuals at the top of the pay scale
14 took cuts. That allowed us to see \$50 million
15 dollar in savings, but that was in the face of
16 \$120 million of projected losses. So this has
17 really been financially impactful for us, as
18 well.

19 And as you've heard and can certainly
20 imagine, part of the challenge is providing
21 adequate testing so that those people who are on
22 campus can feel that they're doing that safely.
23 In terms of the community impact, honoring our
24 place in the city, we were honored to offer the
25 city our Liacouras arena as a surge hospital. It

1 never got needed, but we needed to be prepared
2 and we were pleased to do that. This has
3 provided a really wonderful opportunity and I
4 should hasten to say one of my colleagues
5 yesterday said, you can't call COVID good news,
6 but we can take advantage of COVID. And one of
7 the ways that we have taken advantage of COVID is
8 increase partnerships. Temple Health and Penn
9 Health are working to provide services to 300
10 group facilities in Bucks, Chester, Lancaster,
11 and Philadelphia Counties.

12 we've touched 2,500 residents. So that's
13 the kind of thing where we're trying to turn
14 lemons into lemonade. We, too, are looking
15 forward to the impact of vaccines on a more
16 plentiful level so that we can make sure that our
17 community, our faculty, our staff and our
18 students can return in greater numbers safely,
19 which is certainly our hope in the fall.

20 And I guess I would end by just saying we
21 are cautiously optimistic -- by the fall, I don't
22 think life will be entirely back to normal, but
23 we certainly hope to have predominantly in-person
24 classes in the fall. But I want to end with
25 this. I think it's really important to say that

1 our goal in doing that is not just because of
2 Temple's revenue. It is because we believe very,
3 very clearly that higher ed remains really
4 important in this world. We have problems to
5 solve, and many of those people are going to need
6 a college degree in order to do that.

7 And so it's our effort, all of our
8 collective effort, to maintain and stay the
9 course and keep our students on track. It is not
10 a selfish motivation. It really is, I think, one
11 that is important for us to say is our
12 contribution to society. So thank you very much
13 for this opportunity. I, too, stand ready to
14 answer any questions you have.

15 Thank you very much.

16 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SONNEY: Thank you.

17 And our final presenter will be Thomas
18 Foley, President of the Association of
19 Independent Colleges and Universities of
20 Pennsylvania.

21 You have to unmute.

22 MR. FOLEY: There we go. Can you hear me
23 now?

24 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SONNEY: Yes.

25 MR. FOLEY: Great. Thank you,

1 Mr. Chairman. Thank you for hosting the hearing
2 on this incredible period of time in the history
3 of our country.

4 I'm grateful to represent 92
5 institutions, non-profit independent schools in
6 Pennsylvania. They educate 51 percent of all
7 students pursuing four-year degrees in this
8 State. They educate 50 percent of all the
9 students of color pursuing four-year degrees, 49
10 percent of all of the adult students who are
11 re-skilling and up-skilling. And 49 percent of
12 all the students who received PHEAA grants go to
13 one of these independent non-profit schools.
14 Seventy of them are over one hundred years old
15 and they have been imbedded in 50 different
16 communities across this State for that entire
17 period. Fifty-three of them have health-science
18 programs.

19 And as Dr. Epps just indicated, they have
20 been happy to participate in testing initiatives
21 and now vaccination initiatives, with their
22 nursing and other programs. These schools are
23 fundamental economic partners, as my colleagues
24 have indicated. An independent study just a year
25 ago showed they contribute \$24 billion a year to

1 this economy. They're responsible for 195,000
2 jobs. They pay \$1.1 billion in State and local
3 taxes and they donate 5.3 million hours in
4 community service in all 67 counties.

5 I want to second the comments of my
6 colleagues on the impact of this pandemic.
7 Certainly in terms of dollars, the costs
8 nationally, over \$140 billion for higher
9 education. The cost to these 92 schools -- and
10 we surveyed them on a regular basis -- is now
11 well over a billion dollars. But I think the
12 comment my colleague made about mental health is
13 well taken and consistent across the sector.

14 And the impact on our communities, I
15 think, cannot be overstated. I'm a recovering
16 college president. The small town where I served
17 as president had two pizza shops. When our State
18 prison closed, I went and saw Mr. Dunny
19 [phonetic]. I asked him what that did to him,
20 and he said, that's 40 percent of my business out
21 the door. I said, what happens if Madalolicious
22 [phonetic] closes; he said, so do I.

23 That is the impact that these schools
24 have on so many of these communities. And I know
25 that you understand that. I also want to second

1 the comments of my colleagues in terms of the
2 resiliency of this sector. It's not perfect, but
3 essentially, people are paid to think for a
4 living in this sector. And I think they've done
5 a very good job of thinking about how do we
6 address and emerge from this.

7 For example, when the immediate shutdown
8 occurred last spring, there were issues for
9 literally thousands of students in our sector,
10 who were vulnerable, did not, in many cases, have
11 a home to go to, or did not have a home that they
12 could safely go to. Our schools worked around
13 all of the requirements for quarantining, made
14 sure that those students stayed safe, got fed,
15 had a place to live.

16 There are literally dozens of examples
17 like that where our institutions had to adjust on
18 the fly to make sure they could take care of
19 their students and also be responsible for their
20 community. Similarly, in how we teach at school
21 now, the change is in calendars, the change is in
22 teaching modalities, the change is in
23 participation methods. We never would have
24 anticipated doing all of these in such a short
25 period of time, but these 92 schools and the

1 schools my colleagues represent have done a
2 remarkable job in adjusting, you know, how
3 education is delivered.

4 Let me end by saying that we are grateful
5 for your support and continue to need your
6 support in a number of areas. First of all,
7 testing, the provision of PPP equipment, contact
8 tracing, and now vaccination; those are the
9 gateways to ending this pandemic. We need your
10 continued support, and you've been terrific at
11 helping us manage all of those processes.

12 Secondly, there are laws and regulations
13 that have to do with when nurses become qualified
14 for example, when somebody has enough clinical
15 hours, when a teacher can be certified. And the
16 regulatory agencies that you supervise have
17 actually been very cooperative and helpful, and
18 we'll need to continue that as we go down the
19 road.

20 Thirdly, in terms of liability. These
21 institutions for whom I speak are non-profit
22 institutions. We have a disease that we still
23 don't understand everything about it, let alone
24 the new variants that are coming, some kind of
25 time-limited, targeted protection. If only for

1 the schools that have donated their PPE or who
2 are providing testing services or who will be
3 providing vaccination services is something I
4 hope that you'll be able to consider. Let me end
5 by saying how grateful we are in the current year
6 that you preserved the funding for PHEAA.

7 Those are the only dollars that these
8 independent non-profit schools received. We are
9 educating 44 percent of all the low-income kids
10 that get PHEAA and Pell dollars and maintaining
11 that low level was critically important to these
12 students being able to stay on their trajectory.
13 Thank you very much for holding the hearing. We
14 look forward to your questions.

15 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SONNEY: Thank you.

16 I'll start the questions with -- I'm not
17 sure that I need to direct it to any one
18 individual because I think that my question, you
19 know, will probably have multiple answers to it.

20 But how concerned are all of you over the
21 incoming new class and, you know, the potential
22 loss that they will have as freshmen?

23 And you know, how are you going to manage
24 through that?

25 we all know that one thing that

1 continually adds to the cost of education is
2 taking remedial classes, you know, for a year to
3 actually prepare you to begin your degreed
4 program. You know, have you given considerable
5 thought on how you're going to be able to handle
6 that?

7 Go ahead.

8 DR. ERICKSON: Yeah, I'm happy to jump in
9 there. At the community college end, about 60
10 percent of the students that come to us require
11 some level of remediation, either in math or in
12 English. Certainly in my conversations with the
13 superintendents, it's clear to me that those
14 numbers will go up in the year ahead.

15 One of the programs that we have in
16 Northampton that we put in place a couple of
17 years ago is actually instead of waiting for
18 students to come to us, going into the high
19 schools during their senior year and providing
20 some of that remedial math and English
21 preparation along with a student success class.
22 To really make that transition easier, I see us
23 doing far more of that into the remainder of this
24 year and next here, as a way or directly
25 partnering with 8 through 12 to address what is

1 clearly going to be a shortcoming there.

2 DR. ALLEN: Well, I'll just say then,
3 following some of the best practices in
4 developmental education, what we're doing is
5 scaling our credit bearing courses to allow
6 students who need some help to be in a credit
7 bearing course that has extra practice, extra
8 opportunity to begin to really develop and hone
9 those skills while also being in a course that
10 will provide the credit that they need to
11 continue on their trajectory towards graduation.

12 MS. EPPS: This is JoAnne.

13 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SONNEY: You have to
14 unmute.

15 MS. EPPS: I did, I think.

16 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SONNEY: I can hear
17 you.

18 MS. EPPS: Sorry. It takes a moment, I
19 realized. This is JoAnne Epps.

20 I think the only thing I would add is
21 that we're all going to be challenged to remain
22 as flexible and nimble as we have demonstrated
23 ourselves to be over the last year because we're
24 not even going to know the level of loss until we
25 bring the class in and begin to experience what

1 they have and what they have not been able to
2 accomplish as they finish their high school
3 education. So I think that the question is
4 certainly well taken. You can hear that all of
5 us are being thoughtful about it, but I think
6 that you'll find that all of us are going to have
7 to navigate this through the next year without a
8 lot of history and playbook experience to do so.

9 DR. DRISCOLL: If I might, I would just
10 add one more thing. And I agree with my
11 colleague's comments to the moment.

12 I think that there's a real potential for
13 significantly expanding an already good cross
14 sector collaboration as we work on this. And I
15 think particularly working with both our K-12
16 systems and our community college partners to
17 make sure we're providing the right support as we
18 learn and adapt. As Dr. Epps just said, we're
19 going to have to figure out exactly what this
20 looks like as we take the steps into the future.

21 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SONNEY: Thank you.
22 Representative Staats.

23 REPRESENTATIVE STAATS: Thank you,
24 Mr. Chairman. And of course, thank you to our
25 panel for your time today.

1 My question is regarding campus
2 recruiting. I know that -- I was recruited off
3 my college campus by Marriott Hotels a few years
4 ago. And my son was recruited out of
5 Shippensburg and still maintains employment by
6 that company five years after. But in addition
7 to cancelling face-to-face training sessions,
8 companies are growing concerned about talent
9 pipelines at colleges and universities as the
10 recruiters will be unable to attend the events.

11 So I'm just curious, can you share any
12 thoughts or observations that you're seeing out
13 there? And I guess that question is for anyone
14 that can share anything.

15 DR. DRISCOLL: If I might just start. I
16 appreciate the question. Our career and
17 professional development center, which is the
18 nexus for those sorts of activities for the
19 employers, has been incredibly proactive in
20 mounting a number of continuing virtual
21 interactions with our students, providing them
22 with the same sort of development to prepare for
23 their transition to the work force, but also to
24 connect them with certain employers, often
25 companies/industries that are headed by alumni

1 who have been equally vested in maintaining those
2 connections, not as good as the face-to-face.
3 Not as good as those interviews happening
4 face-to-face. Not as good as the interaction we
5 might hope for, but certainly we've been very
6 proactive in that, to try to address that
7 question, almost from day one of the pandemic
8 when we had to pivot.

9 MR. FOLEY: I would agree with Michael's
10 comments. I think the good news is that on all
11 of these systems that are represented here today,
12 the average is 70 percent of our students are in
13 what are called career directing majors from
14 health-science to business to IT. So they're
15 taking that first step.

16 I would only add that, you know, we're
17 zooming up the Zoom. And all of our career
18 development programs are doing exactly what
19 you're doing in this hearing, not letting the
20 work stop just because we can't engage in person.
21 And across the state, that is what our folks are
22 doing. I think I say that for all our sectors.
23 I can tell you for sure in our sector, we zoomed
24 the zoom, so to speak.

25 DR. ERICKSON: Yeah, I would add from the

1 community college space at Northampton we've
2 actually had more appointments in our career
3 planning and placement office post-pandemic than
4 we had pre-pandemic. And we, you know, like
5 others have talked about, it really created a
6 number of virtual open houses and recruiting
7 fairs, often in concert with our local workforce
8 folks and with local businesses.

9 So you know, I've been happy to see how
10 active that space is. Certainly, the need from
11 employers continues to grow. So I chair a group
12 called the Education Counts Supply Council in the
13 Lehigh valley. And we have regular conversations
14 with employers, with colleges to figure out how
15 do you we make sure this pipeline continues to
16 move forward at a time when it's desperately
17 needed.

18 MS. EPPS: And in an effort to further
19 diversify our workforce, one of the implications
20 in all of this is that a lot of employers have
21 abandoned the rigid way in which they used to
22 select. I mean, there's a lot that is important
23 to discern in terms of interpersonal engagement,
24 but at the same time, you can be distracted from
25 the kind of talent that actually matter. So I

1 think this is providing an opportunity for the
2 pipeline to be broadened a bit, and that's a good
3 fact.

4 REPRESENTATIVE STAATS: So I'm hearing
5 from all of you that campus recruiting is alive
6 and well. And I'm very pleased to hear that.

7 Thank you for your answers.

8 And thank you, Mr. Chairman.

9 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SONNEY: Representative
10 Isaacson.

11 REPRESENTATIVE ISAACSON: Thank you. And
12 thank you for your testimony.

13 Following up on Chairman Sonney
14 discussing getting students back to campus and
15 making sure we're able to capture them on all
16 levels of education since we have many different
17 avenues represented here with all of you
18 testifying. We understand the mental health as
19 well as the education gap that could be
20 occurring, needs to be addressed, and so we need
21 to get students on campus.

22 What's the communication with Department
23 of Health about getting not only your staff but
24 your communities that you reside in and the
25 surrounding communities access to the vaccine as

1 it's coming out as the spring goes forth?

2 I know that Temple, in my city of
3 Philadelphia, was a great asset this weekend in
4 making sure we had a masked vaccination site and
5 it went off without a hitch. You did an
6 excellent job, and it was a model for the rest of
7 the State and something that should be emulated
8 by the Department of Health through FEMA or PEMA.

9 Is there a communication going on or is
10 that something we should look into to have?

11 You all, who are in the various
12 communities around the 67 counties in the
13 Commonwealth to get this vaccine out and
14 distributed so that people can go back to in
15 person and we can start dealing with the
16 ramifications of this pandemic.

17 Thank you.

18 MR. FOLEY: Well, I'm happy to --

19 MS. EPPS: I would be -- oh, sorry.

20 MR. FOLEY: No, no. Go ahead.

21 MS. EPPS: I will jump in only because
22 this is the representative from our particular
23 area. Thank you very much for that question.

24 I think this Committee could be extremely
25 helpful in pointing out the importance of

1 broad-based vaccine delivery. Our University,
2 for example, stands ready and willing to be able
3 to provide vaccines both to the members of our
4 community, but also to the surrounding members of
5 our community. One of the advantages that we
6 have is the ability to handle the kind of
7 vaccines that require freezers. Which you know,
8 local CVS or Walgreen's may not have that
9 ability, so I do recognize that these are not
10 decisions you can make alone, but I think you're
11 looking at institutions that could be very
12 helpful in their relevant communities in getting
13 this vaccine distributed, which is going to be
14 the next challenge that we face.

15 So thank you for that question. And Dr.
16 Erickson, sorry to step on your answer.

17 MR. FOLEY: Actually, that was me,
18 JoAnne. That's okay.

19 MS. EPPS: Oh, sorry.

20 MR. FOLEY: No, no, not at all. Not at
21 all.

22 Let me -- the second -- one part of what
23 JoAnne just said, we have a number of
24 institutions who have volunteered to be pods,
25 Representative Isaacson, there's schools that

1 have health-science programs, that have freezers,
2 et cetera. And we're in vigorous communication,
3 let me put it that way, with the Department of
4 Health, that we can help. As I mentioned
5 earlier, we're imbedded literally, in most cases
6 for over 100 years, in 60 communities across the
7 State, most of whom have these health-science
8 programs. So we're ready, willing, and able to
9 help.

10 We are getting and distributing the most
11 up-to-date information that is available on the
12 vaccines, and many of our schools are conducting
13 community education programs, as well, not just
14 about where to get the vaccine, but why people
15 should get the vaccine, et cetera. They're doing
16 those kinds of things and we'll continue to press
17 to be as effective partners as the State wants us
18 to be.

19 Thank you for the question.

20 DR. ERICKSON: Yeah, I would echo with
21 some of the same comments. I mean, community
22 colleges are colleges of the community. We're
23 inextricably connected with our hospital systems
24 and with our Health Bureau.

25 Northampton is serving as a vaccination

1 site as are a number of my colleagues across the
2 Commonwealth. So we see it as an important part
3 of our role and our plea is to play that role,
4 and like the other institutions, have lots of
5 health programs. So we can help with our
6 students and faculty, as well.

7 Thank you.

8 DR. ALLEN: So I just wanted to add -- I
9 first wanted to say that Chester County Health
10 has been a great partner with Lincoln University
11 on testing. They helped to train up all of our
12 staff who were administering tests, and we've
13 been in real good contact with them with regard
14 to distribution of the vaccine. And in fact,
15 we'll have one of the masked sites for Chester
16 County held as the vaccine rollout continues.

17 I just want to just reiterate that -- and
18 especially for the communities that my
19 institution serves -- distribution of the vaccine
20 cannot be thought of in isolation of education
21 about the vaccine. I was just on a really
22 interesting webinar with Jefferson Health and
23 they showed some data where even among their
24 first responding people in the hospital, the
25 reticence that certain populations of people had

1 about having the vaccine even though they're in
2 direct contact in a healthcare facility for their
3 work. And through their project -- that's called
4 Real Talk. They're just getting out talking to
5 people, giving them the data about why it's
6 important to have the vaccine, but also helping
7 people to understand the ways in which
8 communities of color are being a part of the
9 trials and the data being collected, so that we
10 understand that it is a representative sample.

11 Some of those things really have to be
12 communicated before people feel comfortable
13 enough taking it. And their data clearly shows
14 that they went from just about eight percent
15 response from African-American employees to about
16 40 percent in less than about three weeks, simply
17 by having these important conversations with
18 those they serve. So I'm really concerned about
19 having access to the vaccine, but I'm even more
20 concerned about getting people ready to be
21 willing to take it, as well, because we're going
22 to have to do both, in force, in some
23 communities.

24 DR. DRISCOLL: And if I might just take a
25 moment to add a couple additional things. We

1 have been partnering with good effect with our
2 local regional hospital, which is a small
3 independent hospital, starting with testing and
4 provision of PPE and fabricating that with our 3D
5 printing. We've developed some novel testing
6 techniques, actually, that will appear in the
7 research literature in the near future to provide
8 on-site local testing for rural residents.

9 A concern that I have is the availability
10 of the vaccine, reliably, in our facility that
11 we're partnering with the hospital to provide,
12 Indiana county has a significant population above
13 the age of 65. In addition to our health care
14 providers, it meant that my healthcare
15 professionals who serve students were not able to
16 get vaccines until well after our spring semester
17 had started. We're still chipping away at some,
18 I think 7500 individuals in that over-65 category
19 before we'll start to get to being able to
20 provide vaccines reliably to students, faculty,
21 and staff, even those that are facing front with
22 our students to get them back in face-to-face
23 contact. So that supply is important.

24 And I would also add that via both the
25 university and the State system and the hospital

1 tag teaming, if you will, the Department of
2 Health -- we've been able to, I think, raise
3 visibility and make sure we're all on the same
4 page getting what we need. Thanks for the
5 question. It's a good one.

6 REPRESENTATIVE ISAACSON: Thank you.

7 Obviously, we need to do what we can to
8 make sure that everyone understands that
9 education and health need to go hand in hand as
10 we're getting this vaccination out massively.

11 Thank you.

12 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SONNEY: Representative
13 Gaydos.

14 REPRESENTATIVE GAYDOS: Thank you,
15 Mr. Chairman. And thank you to the entire panel
16 for taking the time to be here and also for all
17 the stuff that you've done to try to educate our
18 kids in a really challenging environment. I
19 certainly understand that.

20 For the students that apply to your
21 schools -- and this is a question for anyone --
22 is the process for admission competitive? Like
23 you have a missions committee, each of you?

24 Anyone who wants to take it.

25 DR. ERICKSON: I mean, certainly I will

1 speak for the community college sector. We are
2 open access institutions.

3 REPRESENTATIVE GAYDOS: Okay.

4 DR. ERICKSON: So we encourage students
5 of all backgrounds, if you have a high school
6 degree, come directly to us. If you don't have a
7 high school degree, we have a GED program to help
8 you get that program to come to us. Having said
9 that, you know, there are still steps in the
10 process between applying and actually being part
11 of our community. We want to make sure, being
12 part of our community, students are going to
13 really thrive. From day one, when they arrive on
14 our campus, we assign them success navigators to
15 help them with that journey.

16 REPRESENTATIVE GAYDOS: Maybe a better
17 way to ask it is what percentage of students that
18 apply to each of your institutions -- and I know
19 it's going to be a different number for each of
20 you -- what percentage is actually accepted?

21 MS. EPPS: So I'll take a stab. At
22 Temple, we are a competitive institution. And so
23 there are people who apply who are not accepted.
24 Our acceptance rate is probably right around 60
25 percent.

1 REPRESENTATIVE GAYDOS: And by the way,
2 my brother is a graduate of Temple University.
3 So thank you, it's an esteemed institution.

4 MS. EPPS: We like to think the Temple
5 Owls are everywhere, so thanks so much.

6 REPRESENTATIVE GAYDOS: You could have
7 gone anywhere, right.

8 MR. FOLEY: -- independent non-profit
9 schools, it runs the gamut. There are schools
10 that are highly selective, very few of them, that
11 would accept probably under 10 percent. And then
12 there are schools that accept above 95 of the
13 students. The vast majority of our schools are
14 on the not open admission but a very high
15 acceptance rate of those students.

16 REPRESENTATIVE GAYDOS: And what
17 percentage -- and I know it's going to vary --
18 what percentage of them are currently on PHEAA
19 loans?

20 MR. FOLEY: At the independent non-profit
21 schools, 92 of them, 44 percent of all of the
22 PHEAA students in the State are in the schools --
23 I can't tell you off the top of my head what
24 percentage that is of all our students, but
25 that's the largest percentage of all the PHEAA

1 students our in these particular schools.

2 REPRESENTATIVE GAYDOS: So I guess, you
3 know, my question is, the President of the United
4 States is -- he's talking about loan forgiveness.
5 And you know, the universities all have different
6 acceptance rates. And maybe the question, too,
7 is, how is this going to affect your students?
8 And basically, what responsibility should the
9 university take in paying the government back for
10 the loan forgiveness if they're the ones, you
11 know, they're the ones accepting the students?

12 DR. ERICKSON: The one comment I would
13 make at the beginning is, I mean, we are open
14 access, so in terms of the percent of students
15 that come, it's virtually 100 percent. Now,
16 having said that, the barrier to attendance for
17 all of our -- for many of our students is
18 financial. Even though we're one of the most
19 affordable colleges in all of Pennsylvania, that
20 becomes a stumbling block.

21 Every spring, every fall, we drop
22 hundreds of students that can and should be at
23 the community college to literally shift the
24 trajectory of their lives, their families, and
25 their communities, but they can't come. So I

1 think a big issue for us is how do we get more
2 dollars front-ended into supporting those
3 students to make sure they can come directly to
4 us? There are loans that are provided. I think
5 it's tough for many of our students, I think on
6 the loan end.

7 But we work hard with them to try to
8 figure out every option to come to the college.
9 I think another statistic that's really important
10 in this -- selectivity is just one of those
11 factors in admission that can be seen as a part
12 of the sort of diverse arena of higher education
13 institutions that we have. So we go all the way
14 from open access to highly selective and
15 everything that you can think about in between.

16 I think one of the most important things
17 to remember. And I think about it from the
18 perspective of Lincoln University, is that many
19 of our schools are doing a great job and helping
20 our students and, therefore, their families and
21 their communities move up in terms of social
22 mobility. So there was a study done recently
23 that looked at how the degree in all the
24 four-year institutions in Pennsylvania related to
25 the economic level that students found themselves

1 at after graduation. Lincoln is one of the
2 leaders in that social mobility.

3 We take students who are from the lowest
4 income area, so 65 percent of our students are
5 Pell-eligible, meaning they come from the lowest
6 socioeconomic backgrounds that there are. But we
7 are number one in the State of Pennsylvania for
8 moving those students from the lowest to the
9 highest socioeconomic level. And so I think the
10 way we think about this is that many of our
11 students start at a bunch of different points in
12 terms of preparedness, hence the question about
13 development education. Some students go through
14 the community college first, and sort of gather
15 along.

16 The thing we do know is that as
17 individuals are able to obtain a degree, we're
18 able to use that degree towards moving them and
19 their own communities up, and I think that that
20 is the most important statistic, and talks about
21 the real power of higher education, no matter
22 where you start. If you start and you get
23 through, it tends to have a positive effect on
24 your life and your family after graduation.

25 DR. DRISCOLL: If I might just add a

1 couple of comments here to the range of
2 questions, Representative.

3 Across the State System, I would hesitate
4 to quote exact numbers, but each of us have
5 separate acceptance rates, ranging I think fro
6 the 70 percent into low 90 percents, depending on
7 specific institutional circumstances. Part of
8 our missions, of course, is to provide a path for
9 students who are first generation in their
10 families to go to college, who might not always
11 hit the traditional metrics from some other
12 institutions.

13 Primarily based right now on the
14 evaluation of factors during the admission
15 process, like GPAs and so forth. Your question
16 about loan forgiveness is an interesting one.
17 And I have to agree with Mark that we all care
18 about the cost of attendance. It's a real
19 challenge right now in the Commonwealth, which
20 funds public higher education certainly at a very
21 low level relative to other states in the
22 country.

23 The question of should institutions be
24 paying back some of those loans -- for a public
25 institution in Pennsylvania, the question then

1 becomes should our current students pay back the
2 loans of prior students or should the
3 Commonwealth's appropriation be used to pay back
4 those loans? There are not other sources of
5 funds that we could use. It's a difficult issue.

6 we definitely have to come to grips with
7 the overall cost of attendance to allow the sort
8 of transition that Dr. Allen talked about for
9 people in the Commonwealth to move ahead, but
10 it's a very, very complex issue that require more
11 analysis, perhaps, than we can do in a hearing
12 like this.

13 REPRESENTATIVE GAYDOS: No, I would
14 actually agree. I mean, the cost of attendance
15 to all the institutions has just sky-rocketed.
16 And so that's something that I would definitely
17 think we need to focus on getting under control.
18 And perhaps this is a good time during this COVID
19 pandemic to take a look at some of those things
20 that are costing higher education -- these costs
21 for higher education so we can become more
22 efficient.

23 Thank you.

24 MR. FOLEY: I just want to add that is a
25 key question. And as several colleagues have

1 said, there are a lot of variables to look at,
2 Representative. One of the things I encourage
3 people to look at is what's the net position?
4 what it is that people are actually paying and
5 the schools are going to, that's dated, that's
6 available from the Department of Education, from
7 their IPEDS system?

8 These independent schools in
9 Pennsylvania, the net tuition is lower than
10 \$13,000. That's competitive with
11 publicly-financed education in Pennsylvania,
12 except for the community colleges.

13 How do they do that? Obviously, they
14 give, you know, lots of aid, et cetera, but
15 that's the number we should look at and be sure
16 that's not going somewhere. That number is
17 actually lower than it was five years ago. And
18 in seven years, it's only fluctuated by less than
19 a thousand dollars. That's the key number. What
20 are they actually paying, you know, wherever it
21 is that they go?

22 Any student loan forgiveness programs
23 should be looking at that in how they target, you
24 know, what those loan forgiveness programs do.

25 MS. EPPS: The only thing that I would

1 add to all of these comments that I think are
2 exactly dead on is you also have to look sort of
3 broadly because at a school like Temple, like,
4 you could look at the posted tuition price and we
5 just were informed a little bit thinking about
6 what the net price is, what are people actually
7 paying. But Temple is an institution where 80
8 percent of our students are on some form of
9 financial aid.

10 I think what you're seeing across our
11 student body is a real effort on behalf of the
12 University to make sure that the students who
13 want to come are in a position to do so, but as
14 Dr. Allen said, one of the realities that we
15 continue to face is that there are groups of
16 people in this Commonwealth who are
17 extraordinarily needy. And it isn't always the
18 case that even providing that level of financial
19 aid that an institution can offer can have them
20 bridge what in that family is a substantial gap.

21 So I think you can feel confident that we
22 are all working extremely hard on this. And I
23 would also just say the other thing. The flip
24 side of becoming more efficient, I think most
25 institutions over the last few years have faced

1 economic times, especially in this last year,
2 where we've become pretty efficient. And I just
3 think it's important that when you think about
4 the cost of attending college, our students
5 arrive with an average of three electronic
6 gadgets: an iPad, a phone, a laptop, and they
7 expect that to work. And the cost of providing
8 Internet is something that 25 years ago didn't
9 even exist. And it's a substantial expense, and
10 it's just an example of that.

11 So when you watch some of the costs of
12 attendance grow, when you think about all of our
13 collectability -- and you heard us talk about
14 this today -- the mental health needs of our
15 students -- we had one counselor probably 30
16 years ago. Now you've got a generation of people
17 who are much freer about seeking counseling, for
18 good reason. That's a good fact. You have to be
19 in a position to respond.

20 So some of the increased costs that we
21 have, I think, really are key to the success of
22 our students. And not because we have engaged
23 necessarily in unmanaged growth. So I think
24 those two things have to be balanced because I
25 think all of us want the cost of attendance to be

1 as low as it possibly can. And I think what I'm
2 trying to say on all of this is, I think you have
3 our word. We're working on it. We really are.

4 REPRESENTATIVE GAYDOS: I guess maybe I'm
5 -- I was pleased when Representative Staats asked
6 the question about career counseling, and of
7 course, also mental health counseling is
8 important, so maybe in addition could be some
9 financial counseling prior to the students
10 leaving, so that they understand how to manage
11 that -- the debt that they've taken on.

12 Thank you for your answers.

13 MS. EPPS: I have to say for those of you
14 who don't know -- excuse me for interrupting --
15 for those of you who are familiar with
16 Philadelphia -- the financial counseling ought to
17 come earlier because what you don't want people
18 doing is financing expensive lifestyles that they
19 can't really afford. And so we are working to
20 make sure our students have that kind of
21 information, so they are only borrowing the money
22 that they absolutely need.

23 I'm sorry.

24 DR. DRISCOLL: Dr. Epps, you stole what I
25 was about to say, I think, in many ways. It's

1 not about counseling on the financial sense
2 before they leave, but counseling for students
3 and their families before they arrive and as
4 they're coming in to make sure they understand
5 those decisions that are being made.

6 So Dr. Epps, you and I just agree 100
7 percent.

8 MS. EPPS: Excellent.

9 REPRESENTATIVE GAYDOS: I'd also like to
10 make a mention to Representative Brown who last
11 year sponsored a piece of legislation that would
12 provide financial counseling in high school. So
13 thank you for that, and I was a co-sponsor of
14 that, as well. So I think that that's something
15 that's ongoing and is needed throughout a
16 lifetime for all of us.

17 So thank you very much for your answers.

18 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SONNEY: I'd like to
19 announce that Representative Lewis is attending
20 the meeting virtually.

21 Our next question will be from Chairman
22 Longietti.

23 MINORITY CHAIRMAN LONGIETTI: Thank you,
24 Chairman Sonney.

25 Dr. Epps, I do want to let you know that

1 when you were having trouble unmuting your
2 microphone, Legislator Emeritus George Kenney
3 entered the room here in Harrisburg and we almost
4 pressed him into service. So he had your back.
5 I just wanted to let you know.

6 MS. EPPS: Good. Thank you.

7 MINORITY CHAIRMAN LONGIETTI: I do want
8 to ask two questions of each of you, if I could.
9 Number one, what would you identify that has
10 changed as a result of this that will never be
11 the same? And number two, what would you
12 identify as the biggest challenge you face as a
13 result of the pandemic?

14 I don't know if you want to go in the
15 order that you testified.

16 DR. ALLEN: As good as any.

17 DR. ERICKSON: So since I started first,
18 I'll jump in in terms of what has changed. I
19 would say that the pandemic has really served as
20 an accelerator. You know, Northampton County
21 Community College has been in the business of
22 remote learning for a couple of decades. But how
23 well we're doing that, how much we're doing that,
24 certainly accelerated this past summer.

25 we had a three-year plan that we were

1 going to implemented that we implemented
2 completely this summer. I do think coming out of
3 this pandemic, we will continue to provide more
4 remote online learning than we ever had before
5 with a higher quality and more wraparound
6 services than we've ever seen and in more time
7 frames, really responding to the needs of a
8 particular segment of our students. So if
9 there's a silver lining in this pandemic,
10 I would say that's been it.

11 And I think we'll see that carrying
12 forward -- moving forward. I think the biggest
13 challenge certainly in the community college
14 sector is how hard our students have been hit by
15 the pandemic. I think disproportionate, given
16 that many of them are students of color, many of
17 them are from low economic status. They, their
18 families have contracted COVID at a higher
19 percentage. They are struggling. Many of them
20 lost their jobs in retail and hospitality.

21 So our enrollments are down, both within
22 the Commonwealth by double digits, and across the
23 country, by double digits, at the very time that
24 I think those students need us more than ever.
25 We're working hard. We're putting all the things

1 in place, technology, financial support that we
2 can, but for many of them, it's just too much
3 right now. So that's our biggest challenge. The
4 revenue loss from that, but more importantly, the
5 human capital loss in terms of the shift we can
6 create in their lives if they were coming to us
7 right now.

8 So I'm hoping we see a big bump back in
9 the fall. We're certainly hoping for that moving
10 forward.

11 DR. DRISCOLL: And I think I was second,
12 so I'll go ahead and go next. Thank you for the
13 hard questions.

14 The first thing I would say, I agree with
15 my colleague that we have accelerated our use of
16 technology in effective ways, but I would
17 actually focus on another aspect of what's
18 changed. And that is that the needs of a crisis
19 have enabled us to focus with much more clarity
20 on the most important things that we do, reaching
21 out to individual students, making phone calls at
22 an institution with 10,000 students to make sure
23 that they're okay, is suddenly the important
24 thing, even though we talked about being
25 student-centered last year and the year before

1 and the year before that, what I might call busy
2 work from this perspective, at year-end, and
3 focus on our fundamentals, something that is
4 absolutely critical, and that we need to continue
5 to do as we build the higher education system
6 that the Commonwealth needs for the generations
7 that are coming after the pandemic.

8 The TAEC that I see is making a gentle
9 transition back to whatever the new normal is in
10 a reasonable fashion to take advantage of all the
11 things that we've learned about during this past
12 year and a half. So picking on the Technology
13 Assisted Education Component where we've made
14 great strides, how can we use that effectively
15 when we go back to normal?

16 We cannot afford to throw that to the
17 side. We have to benefit from that, and I'm
18 afraid that there will be a natural tendency for
19 all of us to -- oh, thank goodness, we're back in
20 the usual and just go to business as usual. We
21 need to resist that and benefit from the lessons
22 of the challenges we've overcome in the last
23 year.

24 Maybe those are somewhat abstract
25 answers, but those are really good questions and

1 the things I've been thinking about going
2 forward.

3 DR. ALLEN: So I can jump in. And those
4 are really hard and thoughtful questions, but
5 they're great questions. And I'm starting to
6 just really think about what -- what's going to
7 begin doing it for me. And I think one of the
8 biggest lessons learned for me in this pandemic
9 is the importance of public health. You know,
10 we've had a few things with H1N1 in the past, but
11 they were so quickly caught under control. But
12 when you are fighting a sort of community spread
13 of a virus that takes you out for an entire year
14 with the sort of death toll that we've seen,
15 again, I look back on my campus and when we first
16 got hit with COVID, we realized that after the
17 last -- I guess it was H1N1 -- we had put in all
18 these hand sanitizer dispensers and so on, and
19 then we didn't pay attention to it.

20 All then, all of a sudden we need this
21 again and we had to buy all new dispensers and
22 all new everything because the technology and
23 everything had changed. I don't think I ever
24 want to be unaware again of a public health
25 crisis. The flu is not just the flu.

1 So it was just sort of revealed to me the
2 importance of staying on top of the things that
3 help to keep your campus community safe, and then
4 the responsibility that we have to almost take in
5 some personal responsibility for that. In terms
6 of continuing challenges, I just really think, as
7 my colleague said, getting people comfortable
8 with life again, where we are and some semblance
9 of normalcy where we are interacting.

10 I think the human spirit sort of thrives
11 to be social, but we are in a place where we are
12 afraid to be social. We see what has happened
13 when people have sort of gone beyond where we
14 were ready to go. And I think it's going to take
15 a little time for people to get comfortable to
16 come back into the world. I'm concerned about
17 integrating my workforce back to campus as we're
18 trying to bring people back. And how do you do
19 that in such a way that you honor some of the
20 reticence that people still have? Especially if
21 you are an individual who also has some of the
22 preexisting conditions that can complicate your
23 ability to fight the virus.

24 And so I'm concerned at this moment with
25 the right process for merging people back to

1 normal, as the science and the data says that we
2 can do that. And how do you do that and also
3 honor where different people are and how they
4 think about it and how ready they are to be a
5 part of a quote, unquote normal community once
6 again?

7 MS. EPPS: Thank you very much.

8 I'm going to identify as the biggest
9 difference post-COVID the same matter that
10 Dr. Erickson raised. COVID was an accelerant on
11 a move to distance education, which I think all
12 of us had begun, but which we learned a lot from.
13 I want to associate with his comments we really,
14 too, scaled up training of faculty. So one of
15 the realities is, we're now in a place where a
16 lot of our faculty have learned how to do
17 distance teaching or a hybrid delivery pretty
18 well. And so the question is going to come how
19 much that becomes a part of our future.

20 Now I'll transition to the second half of
21 the question, which is challenges. The part that
22 I see as one of the big challenges of which,
23 sadly, there are a few, but one of them is being
24 a part of the thinking of what the new normal is
25 because I think all of us agree, we're not going

1 to flip a switch and go back to the way it used
2 to be, but we have to be nimble and flexible and
3 thoughtful in a post-COVID world.

4 And what does that mean for an
5 institution of higher education?

6 Do we become just job-focused because one
7 of the things that we've learned is that we are
8 in a changing world with artificial intelligence
9 and machines and a lot of things that are really
10 different from classical, Greek, and Latin?

11 And yet, the educational benefit that
12 higher education provides, which teaches people
13 not just a skill, but how to be thoughtful
14 contributors to our community is going to remain
15 our goal and our north star. So I think that
16 there's going to be a challenging conversation to
17 happen, not just institution within institutions,
18 but among all of us as we decide what the new
19 normal of higher ed should be and then equip
20 ourselves to make sure that we're delivering the
21 best of that in the varying ways that we do to
22 our students.

23 I just don't think that's going to be
24 easy. While the world continues to work itself
25 out. And I think that sort of settling back down

1 is going to take a few years. And so being able
2 to be resilient through that is what I see as one
3 of the challenges.

4 MR. FOLEY: Great question. And I think
5 great answers. What has changed? I will call it
6 generational adaptation. It's a little bit of
7 what JoAnne and Brenda just said. I used to give
8 a lecture every year at the start of the school
9 year basically about millennials. What are
10 millennials like? What do they like, what they
11 don't like about people of my generation, et
12 cetera.

13 well, this has, you know, put that on
14 retro speed, and faculty and staff have adjusted.
15 And they're now adapting to things that were
16 natural for their students in order for them to
17 be able to educate them. So that actually has
18 been a silver lining in my opinion. The second
19 big change is heightened team work in a way that
20 maybe isn't so obvious.

21 Every one of these presidents had to
22 create a team on their campus to address all the
23 elements involved in responding to the pandemic.
24 And these presidents can now talk to you about
25 ventilation systems at their schools. They can

1 talk to you about the technology behind High
2 Bridge Learning, et cetera. And they've worked
3 with the people who do those things -- and what
4 I've seen across our spectrum is just a
5 heightened sense of teamwork in addressing this,
6 which is obviously also a good thing and a
7 significant change.

8 Biggest challenges? Obviously, the most
9 important significant one is balancing the books,
10 very few of the schools that I represent have any
11 substantial reserves. And they're like you in
12 State government. They can't push it forward.
13 They can't -- and that's the biggest challenge.
14 Second challenge that a number of colleagues had
15 mentioned is -- I'll call it catching up our
16 students.

17 Michelle and I used to tell our boys they
18 would learn in three ways when they got to higher
19 education. They would learn in the classroom,
20 they would learn from their classmates, people
21 coming from different backgrounds with difference
22 experiences, and lastly, they would learn from
23 people who came to their campus for whatever
24 reason. And the last two of those have been much
25 harder to do in the last year. And they're both

1 important parts of the learning spectrum in
2 higher education.

3 Last answer on the biggest challenge is
4 resolving the disparate impact that this pandemic
5 has had. I mentioned earlier that 44 percent of
6 all the PHEAA students in four-year schools are
7 in these independent non-profit schools. This
8 has hit them harder. The comments that
9 Dr. Erickson made are exactly on point in that
10 regard. Fifty percent of the students of color
11 who are pursuing four-year degrees in
12 Pennsylvania are in these independent schools.
13 They have been hit disproportionately in all of
14 the data.

15 And lastly, the adult students, people
16 who are re-skilling. Again, people that Dr.
17 Erickson talked about in his answer to that
18 question. They've all been hit in a dramatic
19 way, and that is a big challenge for us to catch
20 up those groups of people who have been affected
21 in a disparate way from the pandemic.

22 Thank you for the question.

23 MINORITY CHAIRMAN LONGIETTI: Thank you
24 all.

25 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

1 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SONNEY: Representative
2 Ciresi.

3 REPRESENTATIVE CIRESI: Thank you,
4 Mr. Chairman.

5 Thank you all who are here to testify
6 this morning. I'm going to give Temple a shout
7 out. My son graduates in three months, and he
8 got a job in November off of the programs you put
9 together right out of the gate. So thank you for
10 that and the hard work that you all have done.
11 Having said that, I want to refer back to a
12 couple of comments that were made.

13 Temple -- Dr. Epps, you referred to
14 co-curricular engagement, extracurricular
15 engagement that's going on to try to keep our
16 students involved and give them an opportunity
17 that maybe they lost out on. And then, there was
18 a reference in the written testimony from
19 Dr. Allen that really stood out to me. It said,
20 additionally, faculty have concerns about being
21 able to provide adequate instructions during a
22 period of mixed or virtual hybrid and in-person
23 delivery of courses.

24 And just now, President Foley referred to
25 "much harder to do," referring to the student

1 experience and what they're gaining out of this.
2 And my concern is what happens to our students
3 who you're referring to in here that are in the
4 system that are about to graduate, are any of the
5 universities taking a look at post-graduation
6 with these students and then being able to engage
7 them to give them an opportunity, maybe to take a
8 couple extra classes or to auto classes or to
9 have that continued college experience that they
10 all missed out on.

11 I can't imagine what my experience would
12 have been as a student way back when if I could
13 not have gone to campus. I know my son is
14 virtual in almost everything that he does. And
15 then onto the financial side, how are you going
16 to engage these students to be future donors as
17 alumni if they didn't get the whole college
18 experience like a lot of us did because that's
19 based on your experience of donating.

20 So is there a post-graduation idea that
21 you're looking at? And then, how do you deal
22 with some of these comments that were made?

23 Thank you.

24 MR. FOLEY: I will jump in there. You
25 referenced my comment on the back-end of your

1 question, Representative. Yeah, that's already
2 an issue.

3 As many of these schools can tell you,
4 the fundraising has been hit already, but I think
5 you've picked up something that a lot of folks
6 don't see, that it may be different down the
7 road. I think schools can tell you how much of
8 their fundraising comes from sports, for example,
9 and that's diminished completely.

10 Your first part of your question, what an
11 excellent suggestion. We actually have several
12 schools looking at that, you know, finding a way
13 to allow, especially their recent graduates, to
14 engage in a revenue neutral way and be able to
15 continue to participate. So I think that's a
16 great idea and very important and interestingly
17 connects to the donor question, as well.

18 So thank you for the question.

19 Dr. ALLEN: I want to jump in. I want to
20 say hard is not impossible though. And I think
21 that that has been what the greatest challenge
22 has been on us. So for some people, they think
23 moving to this remote would be easier than some
24 of the things you have to do face-to-face, but I
25 can tell you from direct experience, I was

1 teaching in the spring when we first had to send
2 our students home. And to get those students
3 through my course and through a final exam with
4 the last six weeks being remote, I'm telling you,
5 it took a whole lot more from me and from them to
6 actually make sure that they had mastered what I
7 believed they needed to be able to master in
8 order to move on to the next level course.

9 And so I sympathize greatly with my
10 faculty in terms of what it is they have to do,
11 but I also know that as a community people have
12 come together to do everything that they need to
13 do in order to make sure that we're filling in
14 these gaps as best as possible. I think when we
15 look forward though to what's going to happen
16 from a donor impact standpoint, so again, we are
17 working the virtual career fairs, we're doing
18 career development online, the primary thing that
19 we are trying to make sure that we communicate to
20 our students, whether they are losing some time
21 on campus at the end of the spring semester last
22 year and this year, is to know that their
23 institution cares about them, that we are making
24 these decisions because we are trying to keep
25 them safe and the community safe, and that we

1 will still do everything that we can to help them
2 to persist.

3 So for example, our athletic conference
4 had to be suspended because of the health
5 concerns, but we did not take away our student
6 athlete's scholarship, for example. We continued
7 to honor that. We're still trying to work with
8 our alumni to give more dollars for need-based
9 scholarships because our families are having a
10 harder time and we've just been working and
11 working and working with our students because we
12 want to make sure that they're able to persist,
13 despite what this pandemic has been doing.

14 So as we move forward, as the world,
15 we'll remember 2020 -- '19-20 and '20-21 as quite
16 unusual years. It is my hope that what our
17 students will also remember is the way in which
18 the University really tried to put them first and
19 tried to make sure that we could keep them safe
20 and that we can continue their education and we
21 could wrap as many services as we could around
22 them in spite of the pandemic. And for that,
23 they would be able to think about why it was
24 important to make sure that that legacy
25 continues.

1 MS. EPPS: I would also add that I think
2 it's really important to differentiate hard from
3 deficient. I think all of us confronted a very
4 challenging experience over this last year, but I
5 know that there are a lot of teachers who
6 actually realize that their opportunity via Zoom
7 to engage one-on-one was more enhanced than it
8 had been when they were teaching in person. I
9 don't mean to suggest that that's universally
10 true, but it's true at a broader level than you'd
11 imagine.

12 Our faculty were amazingly adaptable, as
13 were our students. So I don't really worry so
14 much that we have a bunch of students who somehow
15 lost out on major pieces of the education.
16 Clearly, they've missed out on the engagement and
17 we've talked a lot about that piece of the
18 ability to learn, learning from your colleagues
19 and things like that, learning from -- but I
20 think we've actually managed to ensure that these
21 graduates are well-positioned to go forth into
22 the world and do good.

23 So to that extent, I think President
24 Allen's comment is really true. They will
25 remember the institution that launched them. And

1 unlike some of my other colleagues, I would end
2 with this point, one of the realities about Temps
3 is although the majority of our courses are
4 online, we still have a lot of people living in
5 our area, not all of them in the residence halls,
6 but in the surrounding community. They're still
7 feeling very much like Temple students. So in
8 some regards, the formality of class engagement
9 has gone, but not the connection with their
10 colleagues.

11 I think the question is a really good
12 one. I think all of us are going to confront
13 challenges as we try to get donations from this
14 class, but you know, I'm not so sure that we'll
15 lose as much as we might fear because I think, as
16 President Allen said, this is a group of students
17 who's remained engaged, just in a different way.

18 DR. ERICKSON: Yeah, I would just briefly
19 echo some of the same comments. Certainly, the
20 experience of these students is going to be
21 different, but I've been impressed by the extent
22 to which we've continued to have student
23 organizations virtually and events and activities
24 and even engaged our athletes in a much deeper
25 way than I thought we might have been able to

1 coming into this pandemic. You know, I think the
2 key part is, you know, if this college has done
3 anything during this pandemic, it's focused on
4 students first. You know, and the call to
5 absolutely every student, just to see how they're
6 doing, the distribution of, you know, computers
7 to every student who didn't have a computer, the
8 direct engagement of our success navigators, to
9 really check in on students regularly to make
10 sure that they're doing okay, not just with their
11 coursework, but with their life moving forward.

12 You know, we had a commencement speaker,
13 being one of our students, at a recent
14 commencement, and I think she reflected the
15 thankfulness of students for the level of concern
16 and grace they feel from our faculty and staff.
17 And I think that will carry forward in a positive
18 way as we look at donor giving from those
19 students down the road, even though, boy, it's
20 been a crazy ride, and I feel for the students
21 for those pieces that they are missing.

22 REPRESENTATIVE CIRESI: Thank you.

23 I just have one quick follow-up for Dr.
24 Driscoll. You wrote in your written testimony
25 how you implemented five payments for the fall

1 tuition or fee increase of fall 2020, but you
2 specifically said, there was a modest fee
3 increase for certain music students. And my
4 question to you is, I could understand, I was a
5 music student, I understand why. But are we
6 seeing that in other majors because of the way
7 that we have to teach now, that we have to change
8 the model and there will be increases?

9 I didn't know if that was because of the
10 pandemic.

11 DR. DRISCOLL: It's a good question. We
12 wanted to be completely correct in what we put on
13 the page, of course. We did increment the fee
14 that students pay for what are essentially
15 private lessons. You'll be familiar with that
16 instruction, I'm sure, Representative -- which we
17 have not increased for a number of years. And
18 actually, we're well behind reasonable
19 comparators marketplace for those sorts of
20 services. It had nothing to do with specifics of
21 the pandemic.

22 It would have probably happened in any
23 case at some point, you know, this year, next
24 year, as we go forward. It was a modest
25 increase, maybe 25 bucks or something like that.

1 So that was that very specific -- if I might
2 though, I'd actually like to make two additional
3 responses to the previous question while I have
4 the microphone here.

5 First, did you know that you can watch a
6 Netflix film together with your co-students when
7 you're not in the same place? I didn't know
8 that, but boy, that's the kind of creativity.
9 You can play bingo, as well, which is great for
10 today's students. They love bingo. Our folks
11 did an incredible job to do hard things to keep
12 students engaged in those other experiences.

13 Second on the giving piece, we just
14 finished our campaign ahead of schedule, above
15 goal, in the middle of a pandemic, not because of
16 athletics, but because of people who are alum
17 giving back to the experience they had at IUP and
18 the impact IUP had on their lives. That is a
19 concern, but I would point out that we have a
20 student assistance fund that we started during
21 the pandemic to help students with significant
22 challenges. We raised about \$445,000.

23 Students are receiving funds from that.
24 A number of the donors to that are current
25 students. And so they're already giving back,

1 understanding that they're helping each other. I
2 expect that we'll see that continue from this
3 class as we go into the future. People care
4 about each other and they're showing it now even
5 as they're students.

6 So thank you for the opportunity to touch
7 on those other topics, as well.

8 REPRESENTATIVE CIRESI: Thank you very
9 much.

10 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SONNEY: We've been
11 joined by Representative Topper here in the
12 meeting room.

13 And the next question will be from
14 Representative Nelson.

15 REPRESENTATIVE NELSON: Thank you,
16 Mr. Chairman.

17 And thank you all for your testimony thus
18 far. It's been a tremendous conversation. I did
19 want to go back and -- Representative Gaydos from
20 Allegheny County had started us on a tremendous
21 conversation around college affordability. And I
22 think that it was mentioned by a Cheltenham alum
23 or Cheltenham native -- thank you, or Provost --
24 that what we are realizing right now is that
25 higher ed tends to have a positive impact.

1 Are you all looking at the stratification
2 of income for recent college graduates? Because
3 I think one of the items that is certainly worth
4 having continued dialogue on is not just kind of
5 the cost of attendance, but the award of
6 attendance. We're -- at the same time that we're
7 having conversations with you guys around the
8 cost of college education, we're also talking
9 significantly about wages in Pennsylvania.

10 Are you seeing that there is some
11 significant stagnation, or are you seeing that
12 the rewards of a colleges education seem to be
13 moving uniformly?

14 MS. EPPS: I'll start. Thank you for
15 representing my hometown of Cheltenham. And I
16 think that in a way, as you ended that question,
17 it threw me a bit.

18 Are the impacts uniform? I think that's
19 a hard question to answer. I think the answer is
20 probably not, but I think the studies continue to
21 show and validate the importance and worth
22 financially over a lifetime of a college degree.
23 I don't think there's any doubt about that. So
24 you know, the range of benefits will vary, but it
25 clearly is going to exceed the income potential

1 of people who don't have a degree.

2 In terms of the stratification, I can't
3 tell you that we actually have done any recent
4 looking at that. We certainly pay attention to
5 that in the longitudinal way. You know, the last
6 18 months have thrown everything into disarray
7 and it's almost not the right year to count much
8 of anything. So I thank you for your question.
9 I think it's something that we need to continue
10 to focus on because it's going to be important as
11 we continue, I hope, to persuade people of the
12 value of a higher education degree. And by that,
13 I mean applicant and legislative supporters.
14 We're going to have to make the case that it's
15 worth it. And that's going to be a long term
16 question that I think is going to continue to
17 require attention over and over.

18 And I would bet the answer to that will
19 shift from time to time. It will be our duty
20 then to respond accordingly.

21 MR. FOLEY: I'm going to jump in here
22 because I don't think it's very usual that two
23 witnesses come from the same legislative
24 district. I grew up in Flourtown, Representative
25 Nelson. I think you have that town in your

1 District.

2 And there's a ton of -- I have 11
3 brothers and sisters and a bunch of them are
4 probably still in that District, so all good.

5 Let me say just two things. One, you're
6 absolutely right. I think all of my colleagues,
7 we watch the quintile measurement, you know, how
8 is education affecting mobility? And as you
9 know, you can track a lot of that by institution
10 now.

11 Secondly, I'm a former Secretary of Labor
12 & Industry, a long time ago, in Pennsylvania.
13 And I always looked at those kinds of data. You
14 know, what connects to income, whether it's
15 education or other indicators. And I have to
16 tell you, after 35 years watching that data, the
17 two most compelling bits of data that I have seen
18 with regards to your question are what is the
19 impact of early childhood education, quality
20 preschool over time; and secondly, what is the
21 impact of higher education, especially on
22 incomes?

23 Early childhood education, you can track
24 that on everything. But higher education, you
25 can especially track it on incomes. I wrote an

1 op-ed a couple years ago on the importance of
2 investing in the book ends of education necessary
3 and I describe those to preschool and
4 post-secondary. That data continues to be
5 compelling, as compelling as any social science
6 data I have reviewed. It's still disappointing
7 in some ways in that there is still disparate
8 impact in there by race and sex. It still goes
9 up, but it doesn't go up as much if you happen to
10 be a person of color or a woman and you apply
11 your education in this specific field. So thank
12 you for the question and your representation.

13 DR. ALLEN: I will just add, again, I
14 think it's important to watch the social mobility
15 indicators. You know, as I look at my own
16 institution and the impact that it has on
17 mobility, especially given the demographic of the
18 student that we serve, we continue to be very
19 proud of the impact that we're having on our
20 graduate's ability to find jobs and not just
21 jobs, but jobs that always move them along.

22 I still think though that we have to also
23 consider the importance to the State for having
24 an informed and educated citizenry, right. So as
25 we tried to move our State and be a part of

1 innovation, bring new ideas, bring new industry,
2 engage in important questions of democracy, you
3 know, sometimes I think we forget that college is
4 more than just about preparing you economically,
5 but it also prepares you socially and
6 psychologically to engage at a different level.
7 And I think that that is as much of an important
8 outcome for the communities that people live in
9 as much as their ability to also get jobs, but
10 you always hear my father in the back of my mind,
11 every time I went to college, "what is she going
12 to do with that degree? How is she going to take
13 care of herself?"

14 So it is important, but I also think it's
15 also important that we are focusing in on
16 educating the people of our state because really
17 it takes a community to continue to move a state
18 along as progress is what defines how we all
19 evolve.

20 DR. DRISCOLL: If I might jump in.

21 Dr. Erickson, please go ahead, if you
22 would like to go. That's fine.

23 DR. ERICKSON: Well, we can go in either
24 order. It doesn't matter.

25 Go ahead, mike.

1 DR. DRISCOLL: Okay. I was just going to
2 say that, certainly, we all pay attention to the
3 workforce needs of the Commonwealth and the world
4 as we look at our programs and how those programs
5 benefit our students as they enter that labor
6 market. We're in a time of dramatic change and I
7 expect that some of our prediction from two years
8 ago will be very different now. And IUP is in
9 the middle of reconfiguring itself to address our
10 financial reality, but also to try to look
11 forward and provide those programs that prepare
12 our students to go out and be successful in their
13 work life in many ways.

14 But I always agree with my colleague that
15 there's more to it than that and we need to
16 continue to educate citizens.

17 Dr. Allen, thank you for your comments
18 there. And we need to make sure that we maintain
19 that core of who we are, knowing that over a
20 lifetime of work and life, some of the skills and
21 knowledge that we gained in college that didn't
22 seem immediately important become even more
23 important. And so we have to keep both the
24 immediate short view in our sights as we design
25 academic programs and the student experience, but

1 we have to remember the long game, as well, for
2 society and for the success of those individuals.

3 Thanks.

4 And thanks, Mark, for letting me go.

5 DR. ERICKSON: No problem. Yeah, and my
6 colleagues have covered a lot of it. I would
7 simply say at community colleges, we're so
8 embedded in the community and working with all
9 the corporations. You know, and we track
10 regularly across all disciplines what the average
11 salary of our graduates is going to be. And you
12 know, generally, we see very positive results
13 there. We actually interview our students six
14 months after they graduate, ask them have they
15 found a job in their field of study or moved on
16 to one of the great four-year institutions here.
17 And 97 percent say yes, so there's no question
18 about it.

19 We just completed a fundraising campaign
20 and it was called Conforming Lies, because
21 honestly, I think that's what it was. That's
22 what we do. We change that trajectory, not just
23 from that one student, but often for his or her
24 family, and ultimately the community that they're
25 a part of.

1 REPRESENTATIVE NELSON: And if I could
2 throw in one extra piece there first. Dr. Allen,
3 I apologize for misappropriating the quote to
4 you. Most importantly, for me and for many in
5 our communities are those who are actually
6 immigrants, and particularly undocumented
7 immigrants who are residents. I am on a board of
8 the Montgomery County Community College and I
9 appreciate how we struggle with this.

10 Can you all speak to not only the
11 challenges of wrestling with COVID and its
12 impacts on your community population, but
13 certainly the challenges of COVID and other, just
14 kind of financial constraints on the undocumented
15 immigrant population at your universities?

16 MR. FOLEY: It was a huge issue, I would
17 say, when the shutdown was ordered last year,
18 Representative Nelson. We had thousands of those
19 students on our campuses in the independence
20 sector. We were able to work with the State, as
21 I know our colleagues did, as well, to be sure
22 that they were safe and they were allowed to stay
23 on our campuses.

24 It continues to be an issue. I'm sure
25 you're tracking it nationally. We're hopeful

1 that the student aid funding that was part of the
2 Federal legislation in late December, that we
3 will get guidance soon that says that we can use
4 those funds to help those very categories of
5 students that you're talking about.

6 As you know, that was prohibited in the
7 initial CARES Act funding. We've been given
8 positive reenforcements verbally, but not in
9 writing. I think it's going to come, but it
10 continues to be an issue for many of our
11 institutions.

12 DR. DRISCOLL: I would add a couple of
13 things from our pivot and going forward. I think
14 each of us dramatically changed some of the
15 operating practices where we have housing and
16 dining services to make sure that students who --
17 to use our language here -- don't have a safe
18 home to return to were able to be served and
19 continue their education, but also continue to
20 live and eat. And a significant portion of those
21 students for us fall in the category you
22 mentioned.

23 I've been criticized -- this is a
24 personal statement from me -- and our
25 decisionmaking. I've been criticized for taking

1 as long as I did to make a decision to go to
2 fully-remote instruction in spring semester. We
3 were on our spring break and I waited too long
4 and our faculty and staff were presented with
5 some challenges as a result. You may recall that
6 at that point there was some question in the
7 national dialogue and from the federal Department
8 of Education about whether our significant
9 international population would have to
10 immediately leave the country. And I had to
11 really put stress on the rest of my people to
12 wait until that was resolved to announce that
13 decision to make sure that we didn't have
14 hundreds of people potentially evicted from the
15 United States at the time.

16 So it is a challenge, and I think it's an
17 ongoing challenge.

18 DR. ERICKSON: Yeah, and I would add from
19 the community college, I mean, we have both a
20 significant number of international students, but
21 also undocumented students. And you know, our
22 goal, our hope is to meet students where they're
23 at and provide them with all the supports we can
24 within the constraints of the rules that we're
25 operating in.

1 I actually served a committee member from
2 an organization called The President's Alliance
3 on Higher Education and Immigration. Our goal is
4 simply to make sure that we have thoughtful,
5 forward moving legislation that addresses the
6 appropriate needs of individuals who come into
7 this country. So you know, as educators, I think
8 that's part of what we do.

9 Again, I think also that's where our
10 communities have been really very helpful, at
11 least the Lincoln community. And so our
12 inability to use some of the CARES money for some
13 of our stimulus on our campus, who had needs
14 though -- luckily we had alums and others who
15 gave that allowed us to actually also offer some
16 support for them. But as all of these students
17 are a part of our entire community, we've had to
18 find ways to make sure that we're taking care of
19 all of our students and not leaving any behind.
20 In some cases, that required us to do some real
21 creative thinking and allocations of things so
22 that all of our students would be supported.

23 REPRESENTATIVE NELSON: Thank you.

24 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SONNEY: Representative
25 SCHROEDER.

1 REPRESENTATIVE SCHROEDER: Good
2 afternoon. I think we're still afternoon, right?

3 Thank you all for being here. I had a
4 quick question because I know there's more people
5 that want to ask some questions today about --
6 did you say, Dr. Allen, that 35 percent -- there
7 will be a 35-percent decrease in students that
8 will be attending school next year?

9 Is that like an overall statistic
10 nationally or for your school, specifically?

11 DR. ALLEN: Yeah, that's what the
12 national enrollment data is showing us, that
13 about 35, 36 percent of high school students have
14 chosen to take a gap year.

15 REPRESENTATIVE SCHROEDER: Okay. So I'm
16 not sure if you're aware of this but I have a mom
17 in my district who was getting here son to take
18 the SATs. And in Pennsylvania it was really hard
19 to find a testing site to take those and ACT and
20 all of that. So she actually put him on a plane
21 and went to South Carolina where her family is
22 from and had him take some tests there, which is
23 absolutely ridiculous. I think it's just, you
24 know, another example of putting students at a
25 disadvantage, especially during this time.

1 But do you feel like topics like that and
2 also maybe just financial futures are unsure
3 right now, especially with our unemployment
4 checks, you know, that were delayed and parents
5 losing jobs and students losing jobs, do you
6 think that all has to do with it?

7 What do you think is the reason for that.

8 DR. ALLEN: For the testing delay or --
9 oh, for taking the gap year?

10 REPRESENTATIVE SCHROEDER: Deciding to
11 take the gap year, too.

12 DR. ALLEN: I think it's a combination of
13 things. Some of it is money. I think a lot of
14 it though is really fear, fear of leaving home.
15 So that's one of the things that I'm reading in
16 the literature, going far away from home,
17 especially.

18 And again, just a lot of questions about
19 safety. Many institutions, from a testing
20 standpoint, have either waived standardized tests
21 even though schools did it for the '20 -- the
22 class that came in in the fall of 2020, because
23 testing really shut down when COVID hit back in
24 March. And it's persisting through this year.
25 And so I think schools are still rethinking the

1 test. I know at Lincoln we've provided an
2 alternative. So a test optional that comes with
3 another set of criteria as a way to allow
4 students the opportunity to still apply if
5 testing is not available for them in their areas.
6 And I believe that many schools are having to do
7 this. This is really a time when we're being
8 flexible and nimble and just trying to figure it
9 out. But we still have in this country a large
10 population of high school seniors right now who
11 are just not comfortable going away to college
12 next year, and I think many of our enrollments
13 will see that, not to mention the students who we
14 have already whose families are suffering
15 financially.

16 And we can't really make up the
17 difference for them. And so they will also
18 probably have to sit out a year. So I think
19 we're looking at declining -- flat enrollments
20 for me would be the best-case scenario for the
21 coming year.

22 REPRESENTATIVE SCHROEDER: Yes, that's a
23 big gap in enrollment.

24 MS. EPPS: Oh, I'm sorry.

25 REPRESENTATIVE SCHROEDER: No, go ahead.

1 Please go.

2 MS. EPPS: I don't think any of us can
3 see into the future. And so I share the
4 uncertainty that we face. We are in, actually,
5 at this moment -- knock on some available wood --
6 in an unusual position at Temple and unusual with
7 the rest of the nation. Our applications for the
8 fall are up six percent. Sort of the highest
9 they've been in a really long time. The problem
10 that I feel, though, is there's no certainty that
11 those people will actually come.

12 Once they've been admitted and they get
13 their financial aid package and they're dealt
14 between what they can provide and what we need
15 them to provide is greater than they can
16 overcome, that doesn't mean anything. So while
17 our numbers have been slightly more optimistic
18 than others, it doesn't give us any ability to
19 feel sanguine by any stretch of the imagination.

20 I do want to underscore Dr. Allen's
21 comments about test optional. One of the
22 realities that we lived in pre-COVID is that if
23 one cared about one's institutional ranking --
24 which some people do and some people don't -- but
25 if one cared, one had to regulate and be mindful

1 of the number of test optional students that were
2 institution enrolled or some rating agencies
3 would criticize you for that decision. I think
4 that all has to be rethought this year because
5 many, many, many high school students can't take
6 the SATs.

7 But I want to return to a point I made
8 earlier in the hearing. That can actually be a
9 really good thing because we are all now getting
10 away from relying blindly on people whose ability
11 to excel on a standardized test masks or -- masks
12 the ability of other applicants to equally be
13 successful. We are now forced to look beyond
14 standardized tests, and I just think that's good.

15 And I was thinking earlier about one of
16 the things that might last past COVID,
17 flexibility in definition of excellence might
18 actually be one of them, so -- and I can hope.

19 REPRESENTATIVE SCHROEDER: Thank you.

20 Yeah, I think we need to stop focusing on
21 standardized tests, as well. And I think looking
22 at the whole student, especially in these times,
23 is going to be most helpful. And if we can
24 really try to encourage that with everyone
25 because I know that testing has been a big issue

1 for a lot of our high schoolers.

2 And I know her son, actually, is going to
3 take a gap year, as well, because of all of it.

4 So and one more piece, I guess, with the
5 student loan debt and situations and navigating
6 and all of that. We've been talking about maybe
7 creating legislation about an ombudsman's office
8 to help students navigate the process and to have
9 an advocate for them to go to ask questions to.

10 Do you think that would be something
11 helpful in Pennsylvania to look at.

12 DR. ALLEN: Absolutely.

13 REPRESENTATIVE SCHROEDER: Okay. Anybody
14 else? That's it?

15 Well, thank you, Chairman.

16 DR. ALLEN: No, I think some of the
17 complicated policies that are coming out, we will
18 need experts to help us really understand how
19 those policies affect us or when we can take
20 advantage of things. I think that would be a
21 great idea.

22 REPRESENTATIVE SCHROEDER: Well, thank
23 you for all that you're trying to do and educate
24 our students and keep staff and faculty safe.
25 And so thank you all.

1 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SONNEY: Representative
2 Gleim.

3 REPRESENTATIVE GLEIM: Hello. Thank you,
4 Chairman. And I want to thank the panel for
5 their testimony today. After -- my question is
6 really twofold.

7 After a year of COVID, does the
8 legislature need to provide any additional fixes?
9 We were talking about flexibility in the statute
10 or in the law for dual-enrollment relationships.
11 And I guess anybody can answer that.

12 DR. ERICKSON: I mean, I'll jump right in
13 there. I mean I, from the seat that I sit in at
14 a community college, I think dual enrollment is a
15 great pathway to college success, especially for
16 many of our students who come from challenged
17 communities or under-serviced communities. As I
18 think all of you know, in 2011, the Commonwealth
19 took away the funding support to make that
20 happen. So I think the challenge for us right
21 now is that many of the students that we most
22 need to engage in that way, we can't engage for
23 financial reasons.

24 So I would certainly encourage a broader
25 look from the Commonwealth, but how -- how do we

1 help those students see their pathway to college?
2 By providing more opportunities for dual
3 enrollment, engaging with us, but engaging with
4 other folks that are part of this call, as well.

5 MR. FOLEY: I would second what Mark
6 says. Part of the dual enrollment thing is it
7 puts students on a pathway. Part of it is
8 affordability. Peeling off some of that cost,
9 you can save one to two years of college costs by
10 using that. When I was at an institution in
11 Pennsylvania, we were an economically depressed
12 area. We decreased our dual enrollment
13 intentionally by 800 percent.

14 We thought it was the right thing to do
15 for the region we were in and it was the right
16 thing to do for our institution. So you know,
17 our sense in general is I think anything that
18 promotes dual enrollment is a good thing.

19 DR. DRISCOLL: And I'll just agree with
20 the three colleagues who went before me.
21 Absolutely.

22 REPRESENTATIVE SCHROEDER: Okay. Thank
23 you.

24 And then the second part of my question,
25 same type of question about what the legislature

1 can do or provide for workforce development for
2 the schools?

3 DR. ERICKSON: Well, I would say
4 continued support for training programs. I know
5 we -- we partner very closely with the workforce
6 board in our community, and we have numerous
7 grants. One is about putting people back to
8 work. One is about helping students that are
9 stopping out to get reengaged. I think continued
10 support like that, targeted workforce development
11 support course. And if you can make it as
12 flexible as possible, I think that's better, as
13 well. I think you'll find a lot of
14 responsiveness, not just from the colleges, but
15 on the part of our partners in Business and
16 Industry.

17 DR. DRISCOLL: I think we're going to be
18 in a period now in which many, many people are
19 going to have to transition at various stages of
20 their lives to new careers. And so providing
21 support to allow them to make that change, which
22 is going to involve re-skilling and up-skilling
23 in various ways -- and I think all of us play a
24 role in that, one way or another. So providing
25 those sorts of funds, again, flexibly I think is

1 important here because of the many different
2 circumstances. I think that's going to be key
3 for getting to the post-pandemic success of our
4 economy and of our citizens.

5 MS. EPPS: And the only thing that I
6 would add, which is different than thinking about
7 it from the Education Committee, but you know
8 thinking about workforce development. You want
9 to think both about supporting the programs,
10 which I couldn't agree with more because lots of
11 institutions are putting efforts there. We have
12 an entire workforce development initiative at
13 Temple, for example, that's really working, not
14 just to get Temple employees, but to train our
15 community to be employment-ready.

16 But I was thinking at the same time, if
17 you incentivize businesses to hire people who
18 come through workforce development programs,
19 that's a back-end way of supporting it. So I
20 simply want this Committee -- and I realize that
21 all of that isn't necessarily within this
22 Committee's jurisdiction. But to the extent you
23 all are hanging out with your colleagues, I'm
24 thinking about workforce development from the
25 beginning to the end would be really important as

1 we come out of this circumstance in which we find
2 ourselves.

3 There are going to be a lot of people who
4 are going to need increased skills. And all of
5 us will benefit when that happens and the world
6 opens and we start going back out, we start
7 paying taxes. It just keeps on flowing, so thank
8 you very much for that question.

9 MR. FOLEY: I would only have -- I did a
10 debate a couple of years ago with Gene Barr, the
11 President of the State Chamber of Business and
12 Industry. And the topic of the debate was higher
13 education versus workforce development. By the
14 end of the debate we agreed that the versus did
15 not belong in there, that these were really
16 partners with a couple of caveats.

17 It is true, as I said earlier, that all
18 of the institutions represented here, 70 percent
19 of the students are in what most people would
20 agree are career-directed majors, but at the same
21 time, the jobs that these people are going to do
22 are going to change dramatically in their
23 lifetime. I'm the child of somebody who worked
24 in two jobs in two different factories in his
25 lifetime. I'm on my 7th, probably, different

1 occupation. I'm very typical of my generation.

2 These graduates now are going to have 15
3 or 16 different job descriptions. And don't take
4 my word for it, it's all over the literature. So
5 part of our job is not to prepare them
6 necessarily for their first job out of school,
7 but to be preparing them for that sixth or
8 seventh or eighth job. So we are preparing them
9 to continue to learn because they're just going
10 to have to be available to this next generation.

11 So it's critically important that these
12 things be partners, but it's not the job of one
13 or the other to do the other one's duty on this.

14 REPRESENTATIVE SCHROEDER: Okay. I
15 agree.

16 And if any of you end up hitting a
17 roadblock, I would appreciate reaching out and
18 letting us know.

19 Thank you.

20 MR. FOLEY: Thank you.

21 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SONNEY: Representative
22 Zabel.

23 REPRESENTATIVE ZABEL: Thank you,
24 Mr. Chair.

25 And I know you guys having been doing

1 great for two hours on this, so I'm not going to
2 be too long on this, but Provost Epps said
3 something that struck me -- a couple things,
4 actually.

5 One is how higher education remains
6 important in this world, and that you hope that
7 Temple students would go forth in the world and
8 do good. I wrote that down because I thought
9 that was a nice quote. Well, speaking of Temple
10 Owls being everywhere, I am a Temple Law
11 graduate. And in the fall of 2008, Joanne Epps
12 was my criminal procedure professor and I happen
13 to remember her saying something just like that
14 in our crim pro class to a group of law students,
15 that we had an obligation as lawyers to use our
16 law degree beyond just our profession, but in
17 terms of public service or to go out and do good
18 for other people.

19 And since I had this opportunity with
20 then Dean Epstein -- now Provost Epps -- I want
21 you to know that's part of why I'm here today.
22 It was certainly a thought of mine when I left
23 private practice that I had an obligation to do
24 -- to at least try to do good. I don't know if
25 I've done any good yet, but at least I'm trying.

1 So that message does resonate. It does stick.

2 And I want to --

3 MS. EPPS: Thank you.

4 REPRESENTATIVE ZABEL: And I want -- I
5 think an important part of the conversation
6 that's come up here and part of the mission of
7 our schools of higher education, there is of
8 course the career and skill-based nature of
9 education that's going to serve a lot of
10 students, but I'm a former teacher myself, as
11 well, and the idea that there's still a sizable
12 group of 18 to 21-year-olds and non-traditional
13 students who don't know what they want to be, and
14 college is a time of exposure and exploration and
15 development of critical thinking skills, so I
16 encourage you that we don't lose that.

17 Now, Dean Epps, you wouldn't have known
18 this, you mentioned classical, Greek and Latin.
19 That was my major in college, and I took it
20 because I liked it. That was just about it. I
21 developed some thinking skills, hopefully, out of
22 that, but there is --

23 MS. EPPS: I took Latin for seven years,
24 which is part of the reason I went there.

25 REPRESENTATIVE ZABEL: And Dr. Allen

1 mentioned, too, there's a benefit to an informed
2 and educated citizenry, which is really nice turn
3 of phrase. So I liked that, as well.

4 The question I had, I think Dr. Foley
5 talked about this a little. Dr. Allen talked
6 about this, too. We've talked about student
7 debt, but student debt is sort of the end -- is
8 the end product of an existing problem, which is
9 cost. I'm interested more in the preventative
10 care in terms of the costs.

11 And I think, Dr. Allen, you mentioned
12 front-end investment at Lincoln, picking people
13 -- giving people access to an education, and that
14 gives them greater socioeconomic-mobility. I'm
15 sure you all, in the positions you're in, have
16 looked at this. But the idea -- this is actually
17 the same thing we do with early education -- the
18 argument for that. If the State spends money on
19 early education, early childhood education, it is
20 shown that we'll have less costs down the road.
21 For example, in terms of exposure to the juvenile
22 justice systems, for example, where it can cost
23 \$200,000 a year to deal with a child in
24 placement.

25 Have you looked, or can you speak to the

1 economic benefit if we commit to keeping tuitions
2 down or driving costs down so that students, when
3 they emerge out of the system, don't have that
4 debt? There's obviously a moral value to having
5 education -- your wage, but does it make economic
6 sense for the Commonwealth to deal with this on
7 the front-end, investing in -- not passing on
8 costs to the student in the first place?

9 I just want to thank you for that because
10 I think sometimes we focus just on the debt. And
11 if I look at what happens at my institution, more
12 than the debt, is the gap, right? So even when
13 students take out all that they can from loans
14 and grants, they still have a gap. And what
15 happens is if you can't close the gap, then you
16 have to stop out. If you have to stop out, you
17 can't finish your degree.

18 The longer it takes you to get your
19 degree, the longer it takes you to actually get
20 into the economic world and I think that creates
21 the cycle. So you know, reducing debt is
22 definitely an important piece of the equation,
23 but more than reducing debt, for me, closing the
24 gap between the cost of attendance and what
25 students can receive in grant aid especially,

1 becomes a huge challenge, especially for students
2 who come from low-income backgrounds. And it's
3 primarily a challenge because they do have to
4 stop out and look at the data. Most of my
5 students who stop out, it's not because they're
6 in any academic trouble, it's because they come
7 into financial trouble.

8 But at the same time, it also costs to
9 offer high quality education, so I think there
10 has to be some kind of balance in that because as
11 we even look at increases in tuition, one of the
12 things we do know -- and I think people have said
13 it in different various ways this morning -- is
14 that that tuition, even the marginal increases,
15 never really cover the full costs of offering the
16 education. So it's discounted in lots of
17 different ways.

18 I don't exactly know what the equation
19 should look like because I think all of the
20 concerns are really very important. But the
21 thing that we do know, basically from what you
22 said, is if we invest more in K through 12
23 education and community development, we reduce
24 the money we have to pay. I think it was like
25 incarceration -- we allocate that. We know that

1 if a person gets a college degree, their lifetime
2 earning potential increases exponentially. And
3 as their earnings increase, I think we also
4 impact the economics of our State. And so I
5 think we have to see how all of those things fit
6 together and figure out how to put the resources
7 in the right place to make that difference at the
8 end of the -- of the journey, or at least the
9 education journey.

10 MR. FOLEY: I think it's an excellent
11 question. I would only suggest that it is as
12 complicated as I think you suggested,
13 Representative Zabel. And you need to look at
14 different sets of -- you need to look at net
15 tuition, what are people actually paying; is that
16 fair? That's at the front-end.

17 You need to look at average debt coming
18 out of systems, you know, and coming out of, you
19 know, where is the debt concentrated? You need
20 to look at debt like quintile. You know, is it
21 unfairly distributed? That will be part of the
22 national debate.

23 should it be an across-the-board
24 forgiveness of debt, or should it be targeted to
25 folks that are bearing a disproportionate amount

1 of the debt. Fifty-three percent of all the
2 student debt right now is graduate student debt.
3 And is that debt, for example, that we should be
4 forgiving? Should we forgive debt to people like
5 me, who is a lawyer, you know, or people getting
6 MBAs? That's all part of the equation.

7 And the last piece of data that I would
8 suggest you really have to keep an eye on, is
9 delinquency rates. You know, are those
10 representative of the disparate parts of the
11 population or particular sectors because that's
12 an indication of whether somebody got the kind of
13 education that led to a job. And by sector, what
14 are those delinquency rates?

15 So I'm sure there's other data, but those
16 are examples of things that you really need to
17 look at before you get serious about addressing
18 issues like student debt.

19 DR. ERICKSON: And I might switch the
20 conversation just ever so slightly to access. I
21 think the biggest loss for the Commonwealth is
22 every student can and should go to college that
23 isn't given that opportunity. And I think we've
24 also got to be honest, the Commonwealth ranks
25 48th in the country in its support for public

1 higher education.

2 My hope, sitting in the chair I am at a
3 community college, is that we can continue to
4 drive down the cost. Even though we're the most
5 affordable option, we're more expensive than I
6 wish we were for a number of students who just
7 still can't come in our direction. So I think a
8 focus on that is important. You know, I'm a big
9 believer in early childhood. I think that makes
10 a big difference, but boy I see a lot of students
11 come to us who are average or poor students in
12 high school that find themselves at the community
13 college and go on, you know, and are highly
14 successful at four-year colleges, go on to some
15 of the finest four-year colleges.

16 Investment to access to our institution
17 hugely beneficial for the Commonwealth.

18 DR. DRISCOLL: I appreciate the question
19 as well. I have just a couple of comments.

20 I think fundamentally there are some very
21 large policy questions involved here. We would
22 all agree that an investment in higher education
23 is a benefit. That's what we do. But I think
24 the keyword in all of what we're saying is
25 investment. If we could invest early to avoid an

1 expense to the Commonwealth, the investment will
2 pay the return and it will avoid the expense. So
3 it's sort of a double plus. The individual wins,
4 but also the Commonwealth wins. I think that's
5 the fundamental to your question and needs to be
6 addressed. It's probably beyond the scope of a
7 single sector like us to do that analysis in and
8 of ourselves. But it's certainly a great
9 question and a great conversation going forward.

10 I have to thank you for your comments
11 about undecided students. Just, if you'll allow
12 me, at IUP, we recognized their importance,
13 looked at some national data that suggested
14 actually, students who don't declare a major on
15 day one may finish college on the average more
16 quickly than students who declare a major and
17 then change a major, which many students do. We
18 established the University College to be the home
19 for -- we're calling Explorer Students, and it's
20 become one of our most popular majors, if you'll
21 allow me to phrase it at that. Those undecided
22 students who we're supporting as they look around
23 to find the right path for them.

24 Thank you.

25 REPRESENTATIVE NELSON: Thank you all.

1 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SONNEY: And your last
2 question will come from Representative Gillen.

3 REPRESENTATIVE GILLEN: I hate to
4 disappoint my colleagues and our distinguished
5 guests. I did take Latin, and I only remember
6 one word, puella. And I did marry that girl,
7 also in college.

8 Very briefly. The effect of COVID on the
9 field experiences. I think of many of the
10 courses that could be studied under your
11 mentorship there: dental hygiene, RN, in the case
12 of Northampton, which I'm most familiar with,
13 funeral service education. So that field work,
14 those internships, those clinical experiences,
15 and then the accrediting agencies, obviously,
16 they would come under the umbrella of these don't
17 hold up well in a remote learning environment.

18 How are you accommodating, particularly
19 those allied health field experiences?

20 DR. ERICKSON: Well, certainly at
21 Northampton, the initial pivot was the hardest.
22 In March when we had to go completely remote,
23 boy, those particular programs were struck hard.
24 So at the end of the spring semester, as we moved
25 into the summer and felt more comfortable, we

1 brought back those students so they could finish
2 their clinicals or do their hands-on learning
3 sorts of activities required to finish the
4 courses. They started in the spring. And then
5 in the fall and this spring, we've actually
6 brought those students back on campus, once again
7 putting all the protocols, you know, in place to
8 ensure their safety. But we have our dental
9 hygiene program up and running.

10 we have our, you know, clinicals for our
11 nurses up and running. We have funeral services
12 moving forward. So we've been able to do that
13 with a lot of care and caution. You know, all
14 the activities you might imagine to make that
15 happen.

16 DR. DRISCOLL: I would like to cut
17 in --

18 MS. EPPS: I would like to add --

19 DR. DRISCOLL: Please go ahead,
20 Dr. Epps.

21 MS. EPPS: Thank you, I would say has he
22 said he has -- thank you I would say that we have
23 the same experience thanks to the Commonwealth
24 and the city of Philadelphia, the latter with
25 whom we are in contact on a weekly basis. You

1 very quickly appreciated the importance of
2 allowing institutions to bring that group of
3 people back. And I can say so far we've had no
4 in-class transmission. So we are very grateful
5 for that permission because it allows us to keep
6 those students moving forward so that they can
7 provide the very important services that they
8 will need once they finish. And as we get the
9 vaccine opportunity, they're going to be our
10 cadre of people who are -- we are training up to
11 help deliver vaccines to the community, so thank
12 you for your support and cooperation in that
13 area.

14 DR. DRISCOLL: I would agree with what's
15 been said. We were very fortunate that the State
16 System, within the guidance from the Department
17 of Health and PDE, were able to put in place an
18 exception process quickly. I actually had
19 students back out in controlled circumstances in
20 summer of 2020 doing their field experiences and
21 clinicals, not in every discipline; we couldn't
22 do that because some areas were not able to
23 provide the appropriate protection, but we were
24 able to do that. And then, we were physically
25 bringing those students back as key cohorts in

1 the fall semester and in the spring, even though
2 we delayed some face-to-face instruction this
3 spring.

4 The hardest part for us actually has been
5 our culinary program, which it was very difficult
6 to do the kitchen stuff. So we actually front
7 loaded a bunch of the classroom stuff for those
8 two. So we still have a bit of a backlog right
9 now that we're working through in terms of the
10 kitchen skills, which were perhaps one of the
11 more difficult areas to navigate in an
12 instructional sense. So I appreciate the
13 questions. It's been an important part of our
14 consideration.

15 The flexibility that I mentioned in my
16 opening comments and that several colleagues have
17 has been absolutely essential to adapting those
18 experiences to local conditions so that we can
19 move forward as quickly as possible.

20 MR. FOLEY: I can't speak to some of the
21 majors that you described in your question, but
22 for the health-science majors, I served on the
23 initial Commission with the Department of Health
24 and the Department of Education folks on
25 addressing these and, you know, that was front

1 and center on the table. It took a couple of
2 months and all of my colleagues participated in
3 getting that resolved, but we did get to the
4 point where clinicals are taking place. I think
5 across the board for our health-science majors,
6 but particularly our nursing and these other
7 entry-level programs where we absolutely need
8 that next generation and they're being educated
9 right now by our folks. So I mentioned that in
10 my opening remarks, that we continue to be
11 challenged on occasion by laws and regulations,
12 but we've been working closely with you all and
13 people in State government and we'll keep doing
14 that.

15 REPRESENTATIVE GILLEN: Thank you,
16 Mr. Chairman.

17 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SONNEY: Thank you.
18 And I just have one final question when
19 it comes to the model of teaching, synchronous,
20 asynchronous, both, which do you prefer? And
21 which do your students seem to prefer?

22 DR. ALLEN: Can I jump in because I have
23 to transition over to the House for their
24 Appropriations hearing.

25 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SONNEY: Yes.

1 DR. ALLEN: I prefer face-to-face, but
2 we've made synchronous hybrid work. I think that
3 there are forms of that that will continue
4 post-COVID, but I just believe in my experience
5 thus far this year, is that for some students,
6 none of the things that we can do will totally
7 replace the face-to-face experiences that
8 students get when they're in the classroom.

9 And I wanted to thank everyone. I have
10 to actually jump off to be ready for the next
11 hearing, but thank you so much for the
12 conversation. Thank you, colleagues. I've
13 learned so much.

14 And thank you to the House for giving us
15 this opportunity.

16 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SONNEY: Thank you.

17 DR. ERICKSON: To follow up on the
18 question, we surveyed our students this fall and
19 there was a clear preference on their part for
20 the synchronous versus the asynchronous, you
21 know, I think that more closely matched, you
22 know, since they were in direct engagements with
23 their faculty member, what an in-class might be,
24 but our number one response in terms of favorite
25 ability was on ground, in class. So that's part

1 of the push for us to move as much as we can on
2 ground as we could.

3 DR. DRISCOLL: I would agree that our
4 experience matches what's been described already,
5 with the exception of a few sorts, classes,
6 groups of students who prefer the asynchronous.
7 So if you think about graduate students and some
8 majors, working adults who are going to school
9 and -- so they often would just as soon do that,
10 sort of being able to do the work on their own
11 time, but everyone wants to have that
12 face-to-face interaction, whether it's every
13 single class or occasionally, even in those --
14 there was a big group that I mentioned.

15 MS. EPPS: I agree. We're finding --

16 DR. DRISCOLL: I think we're finding
17 slightly --

18 MS. EPPS: Go. Sorry. Go.

19 DR. DRISCOLL: No. You go ahead, JoAnne.

20 MS. EPPS: I was just going to say I
21 think we have found a slightly more nuanced
22 response to that. There are quiet students who
23 speak up more readily in the asynchronous
24 settings than they do in synchronous or in
25 person. Some -- you know, one of the things that

1 we should always remember is people learn
2 differently, and we sort of have come from a
3 one-size-fits-all model. And I think this is
4 opening up our opportunity to realize -- that we
5 might realize that there are students who can
6 benefit from a different form of education. Most
7 clearly want to be back in person, but some are
8 finding online to meet their needs. Sorry.

9 MR. FOLEY: I have nothing different to
10 add. I agree with the comments of my colleague.

11 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SONNEY: Chairman
12 Longietti and I would just really like to thank
13 the panelists for joining us here today. Your
14 testimony provided our Committee with an
15 invaluable insight on the challenges that your
16 institutions are facing with higher education.
17 And you know, we do look forward to continuing to
18 work together as we confront these challenges.
19 We know that it's not going to end tomorrow or
20 next week or probably next month, but you know,
21 one thing is for sure. If we can work together,
22 we can make improvements and make it better for
23 all.

24 Thank you very much.

25 MR. FOLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

1 DR. DRISCOLL: Thank you.

2 DR. ERICKSON: Thank you for having us
3 and listening.

4 MS. EPPS: Bye everybody.

5 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN SONNEY: This hearing
6 is adjourned.

7 (Whereupon, the hearing concluded
8 at 12:25 p.m.)

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C E R T I F I C A T E

I hereby certify that the proceedings are contained fully and accurately in the notes taken by me from audio of the within proceedings and that this is a correct transcript of the same.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Tiffany L. Mast". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above a horizontal dashed line.

Tiffany L. Mast

Court Reporter