



**Testimony of Norma George
Professor of English and Modern Languages
Chairperson, Humanities Department
APSCUF Chapter President - Cheyney University
Before the House Education Committee and Pennsylvania Legislative
Black Caucus
Joint Hearing on HBCU's Financial Support / Resources
Thursday May 2nd at 12:00pm**

Chair Schwyer, Chair Topper, Chair Nelson, Vice Chair Parker and members of the House Education Committee and Legislative Black Caucus -

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today about college affordability. My name is Norma George, and I am a Professor of English and Modern Languages and Chairperson of the Humanities Department at Cheyney University. I also serve as APSCUF Chapter President. I am a proud product of the PA State System of Higher Education having obtained bachelors' degrees in French and Spanish and a Master's degree in Education at Cheyney University, and having studied abroad in France with West Chester University and in Spain with Indiana University of PA. I also pursued graduate coursework at both of these institutions. I have been teaching at Cheyney consistently since fall of 1998, but also taught there from spring of 1992 - summer of 93.

Cheyney University has a rich legacy of producing teachers who served not only in the Philadelphia area, but throughout the state of PA, and indeed throughout the country as a whole. I credit this institution with setting me on the path to becoming the professional educator I am today. I received the guidance, instruction and mentorship which I believe could only come from an institution like this, where young students of color from varying backgrounds, many of them disadvantaged, are taught and are treated as though they matter, as though they are important, as though they have value, as though they belong, as though have the capacity to succeed, indeed, as though they are expected to

succeed. The impact Cheyney University had on me was such that I returned with a passion to give to other young black students aspiring to success in their individual pursuits the same kind of encouragement and nurturing I received.

But I am only one of many, many students who have come through this institution and have succeeded because of it. Proudly, Cheyney University ranks number 1 among all State System universities for moving students from poverty to the middle class. Additionally, according to US News Cheyney ranks in the top 67 institutions nationally for social mobility. Similarly for years Cheyney has led the way among PASSHE institutions with the highest percentage of its graduates going on to pursue PhDs. In 2016 that number was 6.37 Ph.Ds per 100 BS degrees granted to Cheyney students. We see other HBCUs across the country having a similar impact both in and out of the classrooms.

Just days ago, the 1981-82 Cheyney University Lady Wolves Basketball team was honored by the Women's Basketball Hall of Fame in Knoxville, Tennessee, with the 2024 Trailblazer of the Game Award. That Division II team with limited resources, poor facilities and lacking adequate staffing beat top ranking teams to contest the final game of the inaugural NCAA Division 1 Women's Basketball championship, and today, 42 years later remains the only HBCU team to reach the NCAA Final Four, and the only team with a Black all women's staff, lead by the indomitable Vivian Stringer. The men's team, led by Coach John Chaney, had already won the 1977- 78 Division II National Championship.

Cheyney doesn't rely only on past glory, though! In 2022, the Howling Wolves Swim Team, led by Professor Pat Walker and with no pool of their own, competed in the first HBCU competitive swim meet at Morehouse College. The grant from Swim USA which funded their participation also helped provide swimming instruction and supplies to young black children in a program run by a Cheyney student, disrupting the pattern that makes black children 6 times more likely to drown than their white peers. This University is making a difference in its community.

Imagine then the impact this institution of firsts could have if it actually received funding, facilities and staffing that it needs, that it deserves! But we do not receive sufficient funding and so we lag behind. Our facilities and infrastructure need to be updated so that we can both maintain our historic structures and provide modern and technologically advanced amenities to our students.

The State Higher Education Executive Officers Association (SHEEO) is a group that produces higher-education data. Their [2022 State Higher Education Finance Report](#) found the following:

- Pennsylvania ranked 49th in public-higher-education appropriation per FTE. Pennsylvania appropriated \$6,090 per FTE for public-higher-education students in 2022 (constant adjusted dollars). For comparison, our neighbors appropriated:
 - New York - \$13,897 per FTE
 - New Jersey - \$8,965 per FTE
 - Maryland - \$9,759 per FTE
 - Ohio - \$7,214 per FTE
 - U.S. average - \$10,237
- **Pennsylvania ranks 8th in net tuition revenue per FTE** (constant adjusted dollars - 2022). Students in Pennsylvania make up \$11,149 in tuition revenue for universities. Due to lower state funding, students are picking up the tab, with higher tuition to make up the difference. For comparison, our neighbors contributed the following intuition revenue:
 - New York - \$6,224 per FTE
 - New Jersey - \$7,969 per FTE
 - Maryland - \$8,047 per FTE
 - Ohio - \$9,708 per FTE
 - U.S. average - \$7,244
- **Pennsylvania ranks 4th in student share, with students covering 64.7% of total education revenue (2022)**. This is an increase of 32% since 1980. The student share is the net tuition of total education revenue by state. This shows Pennsylvania's public-higher-education systems are more student-funded than state-funded. For comparison, our neighbors' student share was:
 - New York - 30.9%
 - New Jersey - 47.1%
 - Maryland - 45.2%
 - Ohio - 57.4%
 - U.S. average - 41.7%

Additional funding would allow us to better staff our programs and bring in new and innovative ideas to further strengthen our offerings. In doing so, we would be better equipped to serve our students, our communities. And we are here today to say that we deserve our fair share, and to challenge you to do right by the citizens of the state of Pennsylvania who choose to attend HBCUs and the communities from which they come and to which they will return.

Thank you for your time, and we look forward to continuing to work with you on supporting public higher education and Cheyney University.