
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

SENATE RESOLUTION

No. 34 Session of
2017

INTRODUCED BY ARGALL, AUMENT, BAKER, SCHWANK, VULAKOVICH,
FOLMER, RAFFERTY, WHITE, ALLOWAY, MARTIN, SCAVELLO,
RESCHENTHALER, TOMLINSON, HUTCHINSON, BROWNE, BOSCOLA,
EICHELBERGER AND WAGNER, MARCH 2, 2017

REFERRED TO EDUCATION, MARCH 2, 2017

A RESOLUTION

1 Directing the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee to
2 conduct a study and issue a report relating to the long-term
3 sustainability and viability of the Pennsylvania State System
4 of Higher Education.

5 WHEREAS, The Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education
6 (PASSHE) was established by the act of November 12, 1982
7 (P.L.660, No.188); and

8 WHEREAS, Today the system is the largest provider of higher
9 education in this Commonwealth, with nearly 107,000 degree-
10 seeking students and thousands more who are enrolled in
11 certificate and other career-development programs; and

12 WHEREAS, Nearly 90% of enrolled individuals are Pennsylvania
13 residents; and

14 WHEREAS, Act 188 of 1982 brought together 14 existing State
15 colleges that varied in size and the number of bachelor degrees
16 awarded; and

17 WHEREAS, PASSHE now includes several branch campuses and
18 multi-institution centers in addition to the 14 main campuses;

1 and

2 WHEREAS, An underlying policy goal of PASSHE's establishment
3 was to provide greater access to affordable higher education in
4 Pennsylvania; and

5 WHEREAS, PASSHE universities have accounted for more than
6 one-fifth of the bachelor's degrees awarded in Pennsylvania in
7 recent years, which is critical to the current and future
8 economy of this Commonwealth; and

9 WHEREAS, Taxpayers of this Commonwealth are increasingly
10 concerned about the rising cost of higher education; and

11 WHEREAS, PASSHE represents a significant investment of
12 taxpayer resources, and it is therefore incumbent upon
13 policymakers to ensure that the system fulfills its mission; and

14 WHEREAS, Fluctuating appropriations and enrollment levels
15 coupled with perpetually increasing administrative costs have
16 resulted in unprecedented fiscal pressures on PASSHE
17 universities; and

18 WHEREAS, The Board of Governors of PASSHE, the Office of the
19 Chancellor, the university presidents and the Councils of
20 Trustees are concerned about increasing student debt; and

21 WHEREAS, PASSHE universities are significant economic
22 enterprises contributing to the overall cultural, educational
23 and financial success of the regions in which they are located
24 throughout this Commonwealth; therefore be it

25 RESOLVED, That the Senate direct the Legislative Budget and
26 Finance Committee to conduct a study and issue a report relating
27 to PASSHE's long-term sustainability and viability; and be it
28 further

29 RESOLVED, That, for the purposes of this study,
30 sustainability and viability include:

1 (1) a detailed assessment of all revenue and expenses of
2 PASSHE, including long-term debt and the current and
3 projected cost and funding status of health and pension
4 benefits for at least the next 10 years;

5 (2) college affordability, including a review of the
6 price elasticity of tuition and room and board expenses at
7 PASSHE universities over the next 10 years;

8 (3) student enrollment trends at PASSHE universities
9 over the last 10 years and the next 10 years;

10 (4) potential for improved PASSHE efficiencies and
11 overall cost reductions, including an analysis of faculty
12 productivity, shared services or potential savings through
13 cooperation with all other institutions of higher education;

14 (5) a review of shared governance within PASSHE that
15 includes a review of the powers and duties of the various
16 parties enumerated in Act 188 of 1982, including the Office
17 of the Chancellor, the Board of Governors, the university
18 presidents and the Councils of Trustees;

19 (6) evaluation of current and future infrastructure
20 needs at PASSHE universities, including academic buildings,
21 residence halls and other student-financed buildings and
22 including a review of deferred maintenance projects and
23 future information technology needs;

24 (7) assessment of the contributions made by university
25 affiliates, subsidiaries and foundations;

26 (8) a review of the human capital needs at PASSHE
27 universities, including impending retirements over the next 5
28 to 10 years, along with the course offerings required to meet
29 future vocational needs; and

30 (9) assessment of best practices undertaken by

1 policymakers in other states to address enrollment and fiscal
2 pressures in public higher education;
3 and be it further

4 RESOLVED, That the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee
5 conduct a comprehensive review of the legislative intent of Act
6 188 of 1982 and system policies, procedures and shared
7 governance to determine whether current practices, policies and
8 procedures are consistent with the language, intent and
9 underlying policy of the act; and be it further

10 RESOLVED, That, in compiling its report, the Legislative
11 Budget and Finance Committee seek input from PASSHE, the Board
12 of Governors, the Office of the Chancellor, the Councils of
13 Trustees, the university presidents, the faculty, university
14 alumni, business leaders, university students, the private
15 nonprofit charitable foundations affiliated with PASSHE
16 universities and any other person who may have relevant
17 information; and be it further

18 RESOLVED, That the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee
19 report its findings and recommendations to the Senate no later
20 than September 1, 2017.