

***MASTER PLAN  
FOR  
HIGHER EDUCATION***

***Commonwealth of Pennsylvania  
State Board of Education  
September 2005***

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## *Preface*

The Public School Code of 1949 (24 PS 26-2603-B(h)) provides that the State Board of Education *shall adopt a master plan for higher education every five years that shall be for the guidance of the Governor, the General Assembly, and all institutions of higher education financed wholly or in part from State appropriations.*

Since it last issued a Master Plan for Higher Education in 1986, the Council of Higher Education of the State Board has expended considerable effort to develop a new plan. The Board reached out to stakeholders through extensive outreach activities that included the distribution of surveys to gather information across the state. The Board also held numerous informal roundtable meetings and formal hearings. Draft copies of plans were circulated to college and university presidents and to other stakeholders to obtain additional comments. Based on issues identified through the outreach efforts the State Board commissioned five studies on critical issues facing higher education in the Commonwealth. In addition, while the State Board engaged in its work, the General Assembly and other groups also engaged in their own major research studies. With each of these major studies, the State Board postponed final action on the Master Plan to ensure its plan reflected the latest available information.

In addition, during this period, there were several changes in the leadership of the State Board. This included changes in the chair of the State Board, as well as several changes in the chair of Council of Higher Education. During this period, there were also several changes in the position of executive director to the State Board. Each of these factors contributed to taking several steps back for each step forward in the effort to issue a new Master Plan.

What follows is a compilation of the work completed over the past several years with updates to reflect current data, policies and practice. The plan largely focuses on the critical issues identified by the Board through its outreach to stakeholders. Included in the plan are recommendations for the General Assembly to amend the legislation that describes the content of the Master Plan. The State Board believes that the current requirements for the State Board to address enrollment levels, facility and equipment needs, methods of governance and other issues in the Master Plan are no longer appropriate.

The State Board recommends that the Governor and General Assembly determine how the Master Plan could best serve their needs in formulating state policy recommendations for higher education. Specific recommendations are outlined in detail in the plan.

The Commonwealth has a unique system of higher education that has evolved since its founding which provides a wide diversity of programs, forms of governance, financial support and educational missions. They range from institutions that offer continuing adult education to undergraduate liberal arts and sciences, technical, artistic, paraprofessional, pre-professional and research through graduate, post-graduate and

professional schools. This range of institutions and programs provide world-class postsecondary educational opportunities annually to more than 600,000 students.

The Commonwealth's postsecondary education system presents it with competitive advantage over many states that have a centralized higher education system. However, this advantage can best be leveraged with the Commonwealth's formulation of a comprehensive higher education policy framework that has widespread support among state policymakers. The State Board of Education hopes that this Master Plan will help to stimulate dialogues that will lead to such a result.

## *Introduction*

The past 20 years have demonstrated that it is difficult for any one body to develop a “Master Plan for Higher Education.” The historically decentralized nature of higher education in the Commonwealth and the range of missions represented among state-owned, state-related, independent, for-profit and not-for-profit, two-year and four-year institutions make it difficult to identify commonalities of interest.

And yet postsecondary education in all its varieties has become an essential component in any thinking about the economic and social development of Pennsylvania in the twenty-first century, and fundamental issues of postsecondary education – issues of cost, access and accountability, to mention but a few – are inescapably issues that impact public policy. Not to address these issues in a comprehensive way is to shortchange our citizens, our students and ourselves.

Certain basic suppositions underlie an understanding of the role of higher education in Pennsylvania. A properly organized and financed postsecondary education system should provide our citizens with:

- The knowledge, skills and abilities necessary for career development and opportunities for employment in a range of technical, professional and intellectual areas;
- The source of essential knowledge for an enhanced quality of life for the individual and for the continuing social, economic and cultural development for the Commonwealth; and
- The reinforcement of principles and actions essential to the maintenance of a democratic society, inventive and responsive to change.

Collectively, choices made in public policy should:

- Enable institutions to operate effectively and efficiently while demonstrating their accountability to state priorities and their unique missions;
- Support the principle of academic freedom in both teaching and research that fosters an environment that advances the quest for knowledge and truth;
- Encourage comprehensive K-16 system thinking and decision-making to ensure access to all types of postsecondary institutions for the widest range of capable students;
- Recognize the varying ability of students and their families to pay a substantial share of the cost of higher education, and encourage individuals and families to save for and invest in higher education;

- Discourage unwise expansion in programs or enrollments as means of increasing institutional revenue; and,
- Provide for the acquisition, construction and maintenance of the facilities, technology and equipment necessary to the fulfillment of mission responsibilities.

Pennsylvanians should expect that:

- Parents and students have a reasonable choice of affordable options for postsecondary education across a broad array of institutions;
- Parents and students should not be unduly burdened with debt in order to complete a two- or four-year degree.
- A two- or four-year postsecondary education will be reasonably accessible (financially, geographically and programmatically) to all citizens able to benefit from such education;
- Students should be able to complete their degree programs within two, four, or – in a limited number of professional baccalaureate programs – five years, and should be able to do so without barriers;
- Students earning a degree from an institution of postsecondary education will possess such general and specific knowledge and skills in a technical, professional or intellectual field as to be able to lead productive lives;
- Instructional productivity of institutions of higher education will be enhanced through distance learning, institutional cooperation and program articulation. Increased cooperation, coordination and articulation are excellent means to reduce costs while maintaining quality;
- Ongoing assessment of student learning will be undertaken to measure achievement, to shape the curricula, assure quality in academic programs and provide policymakers and citizens with information on the “value-added” by postsecondary institutions;
- Improved alignment of high school curricula with postsecondary academic standards should reduce the need for remediation for students moving from high school to college in the future. Given the number of older students returning to education, needs for remediation are likely to continue for some time; remedial efforts to ensure the college-readiness of students should take place at the most cost-efficient levels;
- Technical and career education at the two-and four-year levels will be more widely available to students and aligned with the needs of business and industry;



- Students will be able to move between sectors and between and among institutions with minimum impediment.
- General education courses in publicly funded institutions are aligned so that academic credits are readily transferable.

### ***Pennsylvania's Higher Education Landscape***

Higher education in Pennsylvania is provided through 261 degree-granting institutions. There are 14 state universities in the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education, four state-related universities, 11 state-aided colleges and universities, 14 community colleges and nearly 200 independent colleges, universities and specialized degree-granting institutions. This higher education community offers a wide range of academic and vocational programs, research and community services, which provide citizens with the intellectual, social, and career development necessary for meaningful and productive lives.

#### **Historical Development of the Higher Education Community in Pennsylvania<sup>1</sup>**

The history of Pennsylvania reflects a deep, long-standing commitment to and support for higher education. Even before America was established as an independent nation, the University of Pennsylvania's forerunner, the Academy of Philadelphia, was founded in 1740.

The 19th century was marked by the establishment of colleges and universities that grew out of particular religious convictions or secular interests. These institutions were privately funded, although they occasionally sought and received financial assistance from the state government.

Significant among the breakthroughs in the latter half of the 19th century was the passage of the Morrill Act of 1862. Less than a hundred years after the birth of our nation, the federal government had recognized the need to invest federal funds in the education of youth. The Commonwealth's land-grant institution, the Agricultural College of Pennsylvania, was founded shortly thereafter. This institution was the predecessor of The Pennsylvania State University.

In 1857, the Commonwealth's Normal School Act provided for the training of teachers for public schools. These normal schools in Pennsylvania were the precursors of the state college and university system of the Commonwealth. With careful deliberation, the state recognized its responsibility to its own citizens and, between the years of 1913 and 1922, purchased the then private normal schools for providing state-administered and subsidized teacher training. In the 1960s, the state colleges were expanded into multi-purpose institutions with authority to offer graduate work. As a result of Act 188 of 1982,

the state colleges were given university status and became the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education.

Legislation in 1963 provided for the establishment of community colleges throughout the Commonwealth and initiated local government support for higher education in the state. The Commonwealth's system of higher education was expanded again in 1965 and 1966 when, by statute, Temple University and the University of Pittsburgh were added as state-related universities of the Commonwealth. State Board of Education regulations adopted in 1969 provided authority for the approval of specialized associate degree programs in proprietary business and technical schools. In 1972, Lincoln University was incorporated as a state-related university. Finally, through Act 30 of 1997, the Commonwealth extended authority to the Department of Education to approve the operation of "for-profit" corporations offering associate, baccalaureate and advanced degrees.

### **The Current Structure of Higher Education in Pennsylvania**

Out of Pennsylvania's rich heritage, a unique system of higher education has evolved, which provides a wide diversity of programs, forms of governance, financial support and educational missions. Policy guidance the 261 degree-granting institutions in Pennsylvania is given by the Governor, General Assembly and the State Board of Education, through its Council of Higher Education. The State Board of Education delegates administrative responsibility for the implementation of policies to the Secretary of Education and the Deputy Secretary for Postsecondary and Higher Education.

Five different sectors serving more than 678,000 students are defined for the Commonwealth.

1. Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education
2. State-Related Universities
3. Independent Colleges and Universities including State-Aided Colleges and Universities
4. Community Colleges
5. Specialized Associate Degree-Granting Institutions

Each sector strives toward excellence in its educational offerings with programs available to qualified, deserving and interested students. At the same time, various sectors respond to larger needs of society and strive for a balance of programs and resources devoted to student and societal demand.

This diversity of offerings and services ranges from continuing education to undergraduate liberal arts and sciences, technical, artistic, paraprofessional, pre-professional and research pursuits through graduate, postgraduate and professional schools. Pennsylvania, therefore, is proud of being one of the leaders among the states in providing variety and excellence for the education of its citizens beyond secondary school.

## **Sector Missions**

Reflecting the diversity within Pennsylvania higher education, sectors and individual institutions pursue different but not wholly unique missions. Graduate study is provided by a number of the sectors, just as certificate and associate degree level study is provided by a range of institutions. Within these groups, however, there are those whose primary mission it is to provide certain educational programs. These primary areas of responsibility should be recognized in order to avoid unwarranted duplication of efforts.

This is not to suggest that artificial boundaries around programs should be constructed to limit institutional evolution or the outcomes of productive competition, which might eventually limit the amount of choice afforded students in Pennsylvania. But neither does it suggest that institutions should pursue whichever programs or levels of instruction are expedient. A dynamic balance between specialized missions and institutional evolution must be maintained.

## **Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education**

The Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education, which came into existence on July 1, 1983, is comprised of 14 universities located throughout Pennsylvania, serving approximately 106,000 students or 16 percent of the total enrollment in higher education in the Commonwealth. State System universities offer a broad range of undergraduate and graduate degree programs, as well as certification and continuing education studies. Under the direction of the Board of Governors, historic commitments for academic excellence in the liberal arts, sciences, and applied fields, including the teaching profession, have been reinforced and expanded to include programs in business, human services, technology, and public administration. Each university serves as an academic and cultural center for its geographic region, while strengthening a commitment to research, leadership in economic development and public service.

## **State-Related Universities**

The state-related university sector consists of The Pennsylvania State University, Temple University, the University of Pittsburgh, and Lincoln University. The state-related universities serve 151,000 students or 22 percent of all enrollments in higher education. As instruments of the Commonwealth, each of these institutions receives an annual appropriation from the Commonwealth.

## **Independent Colleges and Universities**

Independent colleges and universities afford the Commonwealth a rich diversity and choice of educational philosophy, mission, and programs that serve both the public and the interests and values of particular segments of Pennsylvania's citizens.

The over 100 independent colleges and universities in the Commonwealth represent the largest single segment of the higher education delivery system and enroll approximately 258,000 student or 38 percent of all higher education students in Pennsylvania. Within these institutions are students exhibiting a wide range of ethnic, geographic, and socioeconomic backgrounds.

The establishment of the state scholarship and the Institutional Assistance Grants programs administered by the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency (PHEAA) has made most of the institutions in the independent sector eligible for some degree of financial support from the state.

In addition, 8 independent institutions receive state aid in recognition of the contribution they make in meeting the educational needs and workforce requirements of the state and in augmenting programs in state-owned and state-related institutions. Areas of concentration include educational programs in the health professions, including optometry, dentistry, nursing, pharmacy, medicine, and veterinary medicine; the visual and performing arts, and the humanities. This state support has strengthened the capacity of these institutions to maintain their pre-eminence in their research fields; and to provide clinical and field services to the public.

### **Community Colleges**

Fourteen community colleges serve 116,000 students a year in credit offerings. This represents approximately 17 percent of the total students enrolled in colleges and universities throughout the Commonwealth. These institutions of higher education were established in accordance with Act 484 of 1963. Community colleges are unique among institutions in Pennsylvania because of local support. As a result, they are particularly responsive to the educational needs of their sponsoring areas. Not only do they provide a diversity of two-year associate degree and certificate programs in the occupational and technical areas, they are an important means of access for students in the arts, sciences, and professions seeking to transfer at the end of two years to four-year institutions. Within their regional service areas, these institutions have expanded educational opportunities for persons from all walks of life and have contributed significantly to the economic, social and cultural development of their area.

### **Specialized Associate Degree-Granting Institutions**

Specialized associate degree-granting institutions offer a wide variety of career-related programs, ranging from short-term to one-year or longer associate degree programs. There are approximately 90 such institutions serving over 49,000 students or seven percent of the total postsecondary student enrollment in the Commonwealth.

### **Coordination of the Sectors**

Coordination among the sectors and the institutions of higher education is provided through a number of channels. The Governor, through submission of his budget

request, recommends the allocation of funds to directly support various sectors and student financial aid. The Governor, either as a budget initiative or separately, may also propose legislation for consideration by the General Assembly. The General Assembly also plays a significant role in the coordination of higher education sectors through the final adoption of a state budget and passage of legislation governing higher education in the Commonwealth. The General Assembly, through ad hoc committees or through its standing committees, convenes groups to make policy recommendations, conducts research studies and formulates recommendations for consideration of leaders of government and postsecondary education. The State Board is directly responsible for planning and coordinating higher education. This includes formulating educational policy, conducting research studies, and engaging in planning studies.

While Pennsylvania is in an excellent position to address its postsecondary education needs through its extensive, diverse mix of institutions and program offerings, there are a number of current and emerging issues that state and institutional policymakers need to address to continue to serve the educational and economic needs well into the 21st century. Through its extensive outreach efforts the State Board has identified access and affordability; accountability; remedial education; articulation and transferability of credits; and, distance learning as the primary emerging issues. In addition, the Board believes a review of the Master Plan requirements also is necessary. The exploration of these issues takes place in the following section.

## *Issue 1*

### **Access and Affordability**

#### *Issue*

The most fundamental issue policymakers must always address with regards to postsecondary education is that of access: Are Pennsylvania students able to take advantage of the educational opportunities the Commonwealth makes available and subsidizes? Probably the most important, though surely not the only, dimension of access is affordability: Does cost make higher education inaccessible to groups of our citizens?

#### *Discussion*

Pennsylvania is home to over 260 degree-granting institutions; last year they enrolled an estimated 678,000 students. Citizens take justifiable pride in the number and range of institutions of higher education in our state. Nonetheless, any reflection on the condition of higher education in the Commonwealth must begin with the question: Are we doing all that we can do to provide meaningful access for students?

The influential study, “Measuring Up 2004,”<sup>2</sup> published by the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, notes that the opportunities that residents have to enroll in and benefit from higher education depend heavily on the performance of their K-12 educational system. On this measurement, Pennsylvania rates well compared to other states. The report notes that eighth graders perform well on national assessments in math and reading, and that math scores for eighth graders have increased over the past decade, outpacing the nationwide increase for that measure.

In addition, it documents that, compared with other states, the likelihood of Pennsylvania ninth graders enrolling in college within four years is high (45 percent). More than that, a “very high” percentage of freshmen return for their sophomore year at two- and four-year colleges (58 percent and 82 percent respectively), and a high percentage at four-year colleges complete their bachelor’s degree within six years, 62 percent.

However, within those generally positive trends, there are some disturbing anomalies.

- There are geographic disparities across the state with respect to access to higher education. In Dauphin County, according to the 2000 Census, 16.3 percent of people who were enrolled in any schooling at all were enrolled in college or graduate school. In Philadelphia County, it was 26.3 percent, and in Allegheny County, it was 27 percent. By contrast, in Warren County, only 10.6 percent of students were enrolled in an institution of higher education; in Armstrong County,

it was 12.7 percent; in Bradford County, it was 9.7 percent; and, in Forest County, it was 5.5 percent.<sup>3</sup>

- Over the past decade, according to “Measuring Up,” among people aged 18 to 24, the gap in college participation between whites and minority ethnic groups has widened substantially. Young adults who are white are twice as likely to attend college, as are young adults from minority ethnic groups.<sup>4</sup>
- The college participation gap has also widened between young adults from high-income families and those from low-income families. Young adults from high-income families are now almost three times as likely as those from low-income families to attend college.<sup>5</sup>
- The percentage of working-age adults who are enrolled part-time in college-level education or training has decreased by 23 percent over the past decade – one of the sharpest declines in the nation during this period. Today only 3 percent of 25- to 49-year-olds are enrolled part-time in any type of postsecondary education.<sup>6</sup>

The issue of affordability is undoubtedly a major factor in these last two items and surely plays some role in all four anomalies.

When compared to other states, Pennsylvania is regarded as a “high tuition/high aid” state; that is, tuitions at public universities are higher than those in other states and that we provide more in student financial aid dollars than other states. To understand this phenomenon, some history is necessary. In the 1960s, Pennsylvania’s public higher education system was small compared to other states. With enrollment pressures stemming from the burgeoning numbers of “baby boom” high school graduates, the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency (PHEAA) was created to help offset the price of attending private colleges and universities, so that greater numbers of Pennsylvania students could enroll in and afford the costs of college. Even as the number and capacity of public universities expanded, policy continued to focus on the provision of both access and choice in higher education.

In large measure, this policy has been productive for the state, as demonstrated by very high rates of participation in higher education there are, however, two drawbacks to “high tuition/high aid” policies. First, increases in student financial aid often do not keep up with increases in tuitions. An analysis provided by PHEAA documents that, between the years 2000-01 and 2004-05, the average PHEAA state grant declined in the portion of tuition and fees covered from 50.6 percent to 39.1 at community colleges. For the State System of Higher Education, it declined from 42.6 percent to 33.7 percent, for state-related universities it went from 36.2 percent to 25.0 percent and for independent four-year institutions it went from 17.5 percent to 13.2 percent.

A second drawback is that for many students and parents, they never get beyond the “sticker price” of the advertised tuition to understand the “discounted price” that they would actually pay. This lack of understanding is most likely to be found among families

where no member has attended college, including lower-income families, minority families, and the families of middle-aged workers, urban and rural.<sup>7</sup> Efforts by teachers, counselors, and readily-available college planning tools developed by PHEAA continue to educate families about the affordability of higher education and the availability of financial aid.

Higher education leaders respond that the prime reason costs to students have risen over the years is that state funding (and, in the case of the community colleges, local sponsor funding) has decreased as a percentage of total budgets. For example, by Penn State University's internal calculations, between 1970-71 and 2000-2001, state appropriations as a percentage of its General Funds Budget declined from 62 percent to 33 percent.

### *Analysis*

Increasing access to postsecondary educational opportunities is more than an educational issue and more than an issue of private benefits for the graduate; it is also a key social issue. The Institute for Higher Education Policy has identified a broad range of public benefits that result from attainment of increased levels of education, including increased tax revenues (as a result of higher wages) and related increased consumption; decreased demands on social services such as welfare and corrections; increased charitable giving and community service; increased participation in civic life; and, greater appreciation of social diversity<sup>7</sup>. Facilitating access for as many as can benefit from advanced education will accrue in turn to the benefit of the entire community.

Most researchers agree with the judgment of the authors of the "Measuring Up 2004" study on the critical importance of K-12 education in preparing students for success in postsecondary education. As noted above, Pennsylvania schools do well in that study, but they could do much better; for example, while 30 percent of Pennsylvania eighth graders scored at or above "proficient" on the national assessment exam in math, 38 percent of eighth graders in Massachusetts achieved this level. The Pennsylvania Department of Education has announced an ambitious program to move high schools towards a higher level of academic rigor for all students, and the Governor's proposed budget allocates over four million dollars to support its initial efforts. This initiative could have significant impact, and should be followed closely.

The continuing under-representation among college students and graduates of three populations – rural students of traditional age, ethnic and racial minorities, and students from low-income families – should be of concern to policymakers. There is abundant evidence that such patterns of under-representation can be ameliorated, where there are the will and the resources. The recommendations of PHEAA's State Grant Task Force are a significant step forward. For the general welfare of Pennsylvania's citizenry, additional focused efforts should be taken.

Increased financial aid, especially aid specifically targeted to lower-income and other vulnerable populations, is obviously essential. Last year, PHEAA empanelled a task



force to review its funding formulas and make recommendations on ways the state grant program can more effectively assist students to take advantage of higher education opportunities. Early in February, PHEAA's president announced an initiative to add \$225 million over the next four years to the need-based grant program.

At the same time, PHEAA announced that it would make \$40 million available over four years in grants to adults taking one or two college courses for job retraining. This addressed specifically one of the anomalies discussed above (the low rate of participation among working adults). It also highlighted a paradoxical way in which policies sometimes can actually work against the achievement of goals. The regular policies of PHEAA limit aid eligibility to students attending school at least half time, and that typically translates into taking three or more courses per semester. Adults working full time would rarely be able to take three postsecondary courses as well, and so they were systematically excluded from PHEAA state grants. This new initiative allows PHEAA to reach out to this important and under-represented population.

Yet, evidence demonstrates that the availability of financial aid alone does not guarantee increased access for otherwise qualified students from under-represented groups. As discussed above, these are often people who grow up in an environment where the possibility of pursuing an education beyond high school is not even considered. Intervention long before the junior or senior year in high school is called for, counseling for students and their families, mentoring, tutoring.

The state Act 101 program and federal TRIO initiatives provide successful models of such intervention.<sup>8</sup> There are over 75 Act 101 programs and 70 TRIO programs operating throughout Pennsylvania, serving over 14,000 and 25,000 students at all levels, respectively. Their accomplishments have been noteworthy.<sup>9</sup>

Finally, there is a too-little-known network of nine publicly funded community education councils whose mission is to "import" postsecondary educational and career development classes to the state's rural counties that are not served by existing colleges or universities. During 2003-2004 these nine providers enrolled in classes over fourteen thousand students of all ages who otherwise, because of their location, would have been denied access to higher education. At least six other rural counties, noting the success of this model, have sought to establish community education councils, but there is not sufficient funding.

These examples, along with myriad others from across the country, document that – with the will and with the resources – policymakers can initiate steps to substantially improve access to and affordability of higher education in Pennsylvania.

### ***Recommendations***

It is recommended that:

- PHEAA should fully implement the recommendations of its State Grant Task Force which are designed to improve the affordability of higher education, particularly the most vulnerable populations.
- The Department of Education and PHEAA review all regulations and policies to determine those that, unintentionally, obstruct access to educational opportunities for potential students and, where possible, to reform those policies.
- The Department of Education explore ways to expand its statewide system of services, including Act 101, Upward Bound and analogous services, to support educationally and financially disadvantaged students to strive for a postsecondary education.
- Lawmakers and policymakers explore alternative funding models to more effectively use higher education allocations to accomplish established policy priorities.

## *Issue 2*

### **Accountability**

#### *Issue*

Governor Rendell's recent budget proposal includes almost one and a half billion dollars in direct support for institutions of higher education. The Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency awards approximately three hundred and fifty million dollars annually in State Grants (which can be used by students at independent institutions as well as public ones) and millions more in loans. To what degree does the public, through its policymakers, have the right to hold higher education leadership accountable for its stewardship of these monies, and what are reasonable accountability expectations?

#### *Discussion*

Nationally, for over two decades, there have been growing demands that institutions of higher education provide documentation that they are carrying out their missions efficiently and effectively. Within the ranks of educators, this is often referred to as the "outcomes assessment" movement. Among policymakers, it is more often referred to as the accountability movement.

During the 2003-2004 U.S. congressional session, the Higher Education Act of 1965 was slated for reauthorization. However, hearings on this legislation became so rancorous, with congressmen and higher education leaders and lobbyists exchanging angry charges and counter-charges, that the item was tabled, to be re-introduced during the current session. Much of the public reporting focused on the highly controversial issue of the rising costs of attending college, but a wider range of topics were actually involved. Taken together, the arguments were about accountability: What are the public's rightful expectations of higher education, how well are those expectations being met, and by whose standards.<sup>10</sup>

Cost certainly is one issue of obvious concern to prospective students and their families (and their elected representatives). But concerns are also expressed over graduation rates: Why do so few students seem to graduate in four years or indeed graduate at all? Why do there seem to persist marked discrepancies in graduation rates between white students and African-American or Hispanic students? Employers complain that graduates of both two- and four-year institutions lack both an awareness of "the real world" and acceptable communication and reasoning skills. Educators rightly point out that all of these are complicated issues that do not lend themselves to simple explanations. Yet, too often, the responses provided by educators themselves sound less like explanations than like rationalizations.

Pennsylvania state universities and state-related universities have a long history of providing annual, voluminous reports to lawmakers on their expenditures and their accomplishments in meeting a variety of goals with public policy implications. Data are collected on graduation rates and the racial and ethnic composition of the student bodies of all sectors, public and private. Reports are filed on campus crime rates, on English proficiency of faculty and teaching assistants, on campus efforts to control credit card indebtedness. Community colleges work with personnel in both the Department of Education and the Department of Labor and Industry to track workforce development trends and to respond to high-demand career opportunities. The Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency gathers information on the income levels of postsecondary students who make use of that agency's financial aid programs. Independent colleges and universities and private licensed schools are regularly monitored by staff in the Department of Education. Institutions in the state, public and private, provide exhaustive data reports to federal agencies, and undergo periodic review by the accreditation agencies that assure their continued eligibility to receive federal financial aid for their students.

Indeed, some educators note that the time and personnel required for filing all these reports is one factor contributing to the rising cost of a higher education.

And yet, unease remains. Annually, the state universities and state-related universities continue to raise their tuition rates far beyond the rate of inflation. As noted elsewhere in this document, graduation rates for lower-income students and for non-white students remain far too low. The difficulties students have transferring credits from one publicly funded institution to another, discussed later in this document, is a regular source of complaint from students and parents to state legislators. The alignment between the skills students have when they graduate and the skills needed by employers too often seems inadequate. High demand jobs go unfilled, in some cases because colleges do not have the capacity to educate more practitioners.

### *Analysis*

Pennsylvania policymakers clearly have the right and the responsibility to hold recipients of public funds accountable for the ways those funds are spent. If the state has a clearly articulated agenda of priorities for higher education, it certainly has the right to expect institutions receiving public funds to advance those priorities. Today, however, it is not at all clear that the state does, in fact, have a clearly articulated agenda of priorities.

During 2004, no fewer than seven major national reports were issued attempting to address the topic of public accountability and higher education, from such leading organizations as the Association of American Colleges and Universities, the Business-Higher Education Forum, the Education Trust, and the State Higher Education Executive Officers.<sup>11</sup> There even exists an entity called the National Commission on Accountability in Higher Education. Especially insofar as this broad rubric covers such close-to-home issues as education costs, graduation rates, and job readiness among higher education

graduates, it is fair to say that accountability is seen as the most pressing topic facing educators and policymakers alike.

Unfortunately, most of these conferences, round table meetings, and position papers are better at diagnosing the obstacles that stand in the way of true accountability than they are at proposing concrete, practical means for overcoming the obstacles. Some of the themes that emerge from all these studies suggest that the bitterness which surfaced last year during the congressional hearings in Washington was perhaps inevitable:

- Virtually all higher education leaders honestly believe that their institutions are carrying out missions that benefit society, and that they are as responsive as they can be, but that they are often called to task for societal issues over which they have no control or which they lack the resources to address.<sup>12</sup>
- Yet, the processes by which institutions of higher education have historically evaluated their own effectiveness – internal self-studies, comparisons with peer institutions and periodic evaluations by regional or professional accrediting bodies – have been “essentially private and institutionally defined... unrelated to community standards or public communication of performance”.<sup>13</sup>
- In the eyes of many legislators, colleges “do not set goals for student learning, and as a result are unable to assess progress against goals or clearly communicate their results.”<sup>14</sup>
- On the other hand, legislators and policymakers often fail to define accountability in terms of a genuine public agenda or to set broad cross-sector goals for student achievement, relying instead on easy-to-calculate, but often difficult-to-understand, indices, such as graduation rates and enrollment rates of racial or ethnic minorities.<sup>15</sup>

A growing number of state policymakers have been attempting to address this last point. The Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education has published “Key Indicators of Progress Towards Postsecondary Reform.” The Connecticut Department of Higher Education has “Higher Education Counts: Accountability Measures for the New Millennium, 2004.” West Virginia’s Higher Education Policy Commission issued “West Virginia Higher Education Report Card, 2003.” The South Dakota Board of Regents has published “Accountability Report, Summer, 2004.” Altogether, 40 states or state system governance bodies have published some form of accountability document.<sup>16</sup>

Pennsylvania is not one of them, although the State System of Higher Education does have an internal reallocation system, Performance Funding, “to reward the universities for demonstrating success and continued improvement in key areas related to student achievement, university excellence and operational efficiency.”<sup>17</sup>

Pennsylvania lags behind most of its sister states in making statewide accountability a public policy issue for higher education. There has not been the kind of

high-visibility, broad-based public debate and discourse involving educators, legislators, business people, students themselves and the public at large that characterized the lead-up to the development of public indicators of accomplishment in such states as California, Colorado and Kentucky. The experience of those states demonstrates that this process requires leadership from the top: Governor Rendell should commit the state to accountability in higher education as he has recently committed the state to leadership in high school reform.<sup>18</sup>

There are structural deficiencies the state will have to address if it commits itself to accountability. For all the reams of data that flow into Harrisburg from hundreds of public and private institutions each year, there is a woeful lack of capacity for analyzing those data or for acting meaningfully upon them.

Some of the deficiency rests with the information itself; sometimes the information collected cannot be analyzed. The most glaring example here relates to the contentious issue of graduation rates. Policymakers look to an office of the U.S. Department of Education to obtain graduation rates for individual colleges and universities, but those published rates refer only to “first-time, full-time” students, that is, full-time students who graduate within a certain period of time from the same school they entered as freshmen. But, as noted elsewhere in this document, as many as half of all students in fact transfer from one institution to another during the course of their studies; those students, and all part-time students, are not accounted for in those federal graduation reports. Thirty states compensate for this by maintaining their own records of individual students (so-called “unit records”), so that they can in fact follow the progress of a student who, say, starts in a community college and then transfers to a four-year university.

Pennsylvania is one of the 20 states that do not collect such “unit records.” There is currently a group studying the pros and cons of moving to a “unit records” collection basis. While there are genuine concerns over privacy related to this issue, the experience of other states indicates those concerns can be alleviated. The advantages for the state in developing a better understanding of at least one key policy issue seem compelling<sup>19</sup>.

There are personnel shortages as well. There are staff within both the Governor’s office and some legislative committees with responsibility for analyzing higher education data, and PHEAA staff regularly analyze student financial information. But the Department of Education lacks the personnel necessary to adequately process and analyze all the data needed for meaningful measures of accountability, and the Board of Education itself has only one professional staff member, its Executive Director. Coordination among all these offices tends to be ad hoc. The myriad demands for accountability recording on the elementary level caused by the No Child Left Behind legislation has placed tremendous pressure on existing human resources, but this must not be allowed to cause the Commonwealth to overlook accountability at the postsecondary level.

Finally, there is a major financial obstacle to the development of an accountability system. The vast bulk of the state allocation to the community colleges, state universities and state-related universities goes directly into their general operating funds; that money supports institutions, not state-wide policy priorities.

There are exceptions to this rule, and they are encouraging. The state provides what are called “variability stipends” to community colleges for teaching certain designated “high priority” fields, and although there are problems with the current system, on balance there seems to be consensus that this is a valuable incentive program. When PHEAA announced in February its new funding initiatives for need-based grants and aid for working adults, it also announced a \$40 million commitment over four years to expand the state’s nursing education programs, a statewide workforce priority.

Obstacles can be overcome, if there is the public will and determination.

### ***Recommendations***

It is recommended that:

- The Governor convene a major taskforce, including higher education leaders, legislators, businesspeople, students and representatives of the interested public, to initiate a public conversation throughout the state intended to identify a postsecondary priorities agenda, and to bring to the Governor and members of the Assembly a proposed accountability mechanism for higher education. It is anticipated that such a task force would be reconvened every five years to update the agenda.
- The Department of Education conduct an internal review of the resources it has and the resources it needs to provide meaningful review and analysis of higher education information for policymakers and the public.
- The state should continue to explore the adoption of the “unit records” student-level system of data gathering in order to build a more sophisticated means of understanding important trends in student mobility.
- The Departments of Education and Labor and Industry work closely with PHEAA and educational leaders to seek additional funding for high priority workforce initiatives.
- Over a five-year period the Governor and members of the General Assembly reallocate an agreed-upon sum of higher education funding to priority programs reflecting the economic and social needs of the Commonwealth identified by the Governor’s task force on accountability.

### *Issue 3*

#### **Remedial Education**

##### *Issue*

Students who are accepted into postsecondary institutions without adequate academic preparation (typically in writing, reading, and/or math) are assigned, or “placed,” into sections of remediation. Most often this remedial education does not carry postsecondary credit or does not serve to advance the student towards completion of an academic program. Pennsylvania policymakers should know how extensive postsecondary remediation efforts are in the Commonwealth, what the costs are to the public, and the effectiveness of remediation programs.

##### *Discussion*

The public does not always understand that entry into postsecondary education is a two-step process: the admissions process and the placement process. A student may be admitted into a college or university but then be found under-prepared in one or more academic subject, usually math, reading or writing. That student will then be assigned to a special remedial (often called “developmental”) section for that subject or subjects.

Pennsylvania does not gather statistics on remedial education at the statewide level, so we cannot be sure of the size or scope of this issue across the Commonwealth. However, data are available at the national level, and they are suggestive.

According to the U.S. Department of Education’s National Center for Educational Statistics, during the fall 2000 academic period, about three-fourths (76%) of degree-granting two- and four-year institutions that enrolled freshmen offered at least one remedial reading, writing or mathematics course. Ninety-eight percent of community colleges offered one or more remedial course, compared to 80 percent of public four-year institutions and 59 percent of private four-year colleges. Twenty-eight percent of entering freshmen enrolled in one or more remedial course, 42 percent of those enrolled in community colleges, Twenty percent of those in public four-year institutions, and 12 percent of those in the privates. (Other studies actually place these figures at higher rates – approximately 33 percent overall.)<sup>20</sup>

These courses do not, by and large, carry the same kind of academic credit as standard college courses. Between 73 and 78 percent of institutions offered these courses for what is called “institutional credit.” That means the courses allowed the students to qualify for financial aid, campus housing and, when needed, full-time-student status, but they did not count towards degree completion. Another 10 to 14 percent of institutions awarded elective credit for these courses, but fewer than five percent awarded subject degree credit. While 60 percent of students engaged in remedial classes completed these



requirements in less than one year, 35 percent spent a year taking these courses, while five percent were in remedial classes for more than a year.<sup>21</sup>

Evidence is that the costs of remedial education are high in both financial and human terms. In 1998, the Institute for Higher Education Policy estimated that remediation was costing two billion dollars a year nationally;<sup>22</sup> that cost can only have risen, since all costs related to higher education have risen in the past decade. NCES, in a companion report to the one cited above, reported that overall almost 60 percent of all students during the period 1980-1993 successfully completed an associate or bachelor degree program, but for students who took two or more remedial courses that number dropped to only slightly more than 40 percent.<sup>23</sup> Several authorities have pointed out that remediation offered in the context of a four-year institution is financially more expensive, and perhaps not as effective, as remediation offered in community colleges.<sup>24</sup>

Why do so many students who, presumably, have the grades and native capability to be accepted into a postsecondary institution wind up taking remedial courses? The answers, of course, are many and interrelated, but the one most common factor appears to be the failure to take a sufficiently rigorous college-preparation core curriculum in high school. According to a study conducted in 2000 by the Southern Regional Education Board, 80 percent of Georgia students who did not complete a core curriculum took at least one remedial course, while only 20 percent of students who did complete such a curriculum required remediation. Similar results were reported in Maryland, where students not taking a core curriculum were 50 percent more likely to be placed in remedial classes.<sup>25</sup>

### *Analysis*

As the scope and costs of remedial education continue unabated and perhaps even grow, more and more policymakers around the country are taking steps to understand the nature of the issue within their states and to contain it. Pennsylvania, too, needs to address the issue of remediation.

The first step must be to learn the extent of remediation within the Commonwealth. Individual institutions, of course, know how many remedial courses they offer, how many students are enrolled, and what those courses cost at least in budgetary terms. The Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education gathers those figures annually for their member-institutions. But no agency gathers this information across the sectors and for the state as a whole. That needs to change if policymakers are to understand how extensive is this issue within Pennsylvania.

Once the scale of remedial education is known, policymakers need to think seriously about the “issues behind the issue”: who needs remediation, where it is offered and how, and how effectively. Plans need to be developed to improve the efficiency of remedial education and its capacity to address student needs. Different strategies of remediation might be housed in different institutions or types of institutions, might be

delivered in classrooms or through distance education technologies, and might entail additional support services.

Yet even as remedial services can be made more efficient and effective, steps must be taken, as far as possible, to reduce the need for those services. Some students may always need some remedial assistance – as, for example, adult students many years out of high school returning for mid-career postsecondary education. But certainly efforts can be made to address what seems to be the prime cause for remedial education: the lack of consonance between the courses students take in high school and the courses colleges expect those students to have taken. Greater efforts must be taken to align those high school curricula with those postsecondary expectations. The Pennsylvania Department of Education appears to be addressing this topic with several of its initiatives, most notably its “Project 720” program aimed at making the high school experience more academically rigorous and challenging. All such efforts should be encouraged and supported.

### ***Recommendations***

It is recommended that:

- The Pennsylvania Department of Education undertake an annual survey of remedial education across the sectors and across the state. At a minimum, this study should measure enrollments, types of students enrolled, credit hours generated, direct and indirect costs, effectiveness and the advantages and disadvantages of various delivery strategies.
- Based on the results of this study, efforts be made to ensure, to the greatest extent possible, that the lowest cost-effective methods be identified for different populations. This might include, as appropriate, moving all publicly-funded remediation to community colleges or even the contracting of educational services on competitive proposals.
- Separately identifiable funding for remedial education be provided to enable the Commonwealth more clearly to understand and evaluate its costs and the effectiveness of designated programs in building skills and knowledge.
- Concerted efforts be made at the local, regional and statewide levels to align high school curricula with postsecondary placement expectations, and to develop academically rigorous, college-preparatory high school core curricula.

## *Issue 4*

### **Articulation and Transferability of Credits**

#### *Issue*

Every year in Pennsylvania, thousands of students transfer from one institution of higher education to another. Often, some or all of the credits they received at their former institution are not accepted for transfer to their new institution, even for courses that in the catalogues appear to be identical. This results in added time and cost for the student trying to complete her or his studies and cost to taxpayers through PHEAA State Grants and institutional aid to publicly funded institutions.

#### *Discussion*

Students transfer from one postsecondary institution to another for many different reasons. Surely the most common reason involves students who begin their studies in a community college and then continue on (with or without an associate's degree) to a four-year college or university. Others begin in one four-year institution and for personal reasons – cost, homesickness, sense of a lack of “fit” – opt to move to another.

As noted earlier in this document, Pennsylvania is one of about 20 states that do not collect data about individual students enrolled in either public or private postsecondary institutions. For that reason the state does not have accurate information on the numbers of students who transfer from one institution to another during the course of their studies. However, a study at the national level conducted by the Department of Education's National Center for Educational Statistics showed that roughly half the students who started college in 1989 had enrolled in more than one institution by 1994. While the bulk of those were students who began at a community college and then continued on to a four-year institution, approximately 20 percent of students who begin their education at one four-year college transfer elsewhere.<sup>26</sup>

Yet, while the phenomenon of transferring among schools is common, it is by no means seamless. Again, accurate statistics are not available, but anecdotes abound of students who transfer from one institution to another and find that some, even many, of their credits are not accepted at their new college, even when it would appear that their courses, say, “Major English Writers,” would be analogous.

In Pennsylvania, a patchwork of individual institution-to-institution “articulation agreements” has evolved. One community college advises:

“Students who plan to transfer to a senior institution are urged to consult with their faculty advisor and/or a counselor to make certain that the courses they select meet both the Lehigh County Community College requirements above and those of the senior institution(s) to which they wish to transfer. Copies of the Lehigh County

Community College document, Course Comparison Summaries, are available in the Career Collection (Enrollment Services) to assist students to enroll in Lehigh County Community College courses equivalent to courses offered at numerous colleges and universities in central and eastern Pennsylvania.”

But that may be of little help if the student wishes, or needs, to transfer to a college not in central or eastern Pennsylvania.

Educators and the public have long been aware that the process of transferring credits from one institution to another needs to be simplified. Indeed, a meeting on articulation was convened involving the Pennsylvania Department of Education, the state colleges and the Community College Committee on Academic Affairs in Allentown – in 1969. Sporadic initiatives were made during the 1970s and ‘80s. During the 1990s, the state universities and the community colleges attempted to develop an electronic articulation system, but it proved too complex and labor-intensive. In 1998, the two groups developed an “Academic Passport,” designed to frame transfer requirements and responsibilities for students completing associate degrees seeking transfer to State System universities.

Yet complaints continue to be voiced that while the Academic Passport is good in theory, it is often interpreted differently among institutions and, in some cases, is ignored altogether. No general education core exists on a statewide basis among publicly funded institutions, and decisions to accept or reject transfer credits often appear to be made arbitrarily.

### *Analysis*

Facilitating the transferability of academic credits among (and, in some cases, even within) the various postsecondary sectors should be a priority for policymakers. The benefits of an educated citizenry in the 21st century are, by now, self-evident, and artificial or unnecessary impediments to achieving a postsecondary education should be eliminated.

When a student loses as much as a semester’s worth of credits by transferring from one institution to another, that involves a loss both of time and of money. Although Pennsylvania, due to its limited system of community colleges, is not near the national norm, where about half of all students attend more than one college, the scale of those losses becomes evident.

The bulk of student transfers involve people beginning their studies in community colleges or other associate degree granting institutions who intend to move on for their junior and senior years at a four-year institution. Given the dramatically lower tuition rates at community colleges, this is a route that is particularly valuable for lower-income

students, and it is a route that should be supported. But for this option to be a true benefit, transferability of credits must be more seamless.

Similarly, the Department of Education is embarking on an ambitious program to improve the academic rigor of the high schools. One part of that program would enable high school students under certain circumstances to take postsecondary classes (“dual enrollment”). This too is a route that should be supported. But it will be of little appeal unless the students can be confident those credits can transfer to other colleges.

To be sure, it is one of the fundamental rights of a college faculty to establish its own curriculum and its own graduation requirements; this analysis does not question that right. On the contrary, the last 35 years’ history, since the time of that meeting in Allenberry in 1969, demonstrates that faculty across the Commonwealth have been aware of and have attempted to address the problems of articulation. Yet problems remain. Public-policymakers need to intervene to move this issue towards resolution.

### ***Recommendations***

It is recommended that:

- Both the Governor’s office and the General Assembly emphasize the importance for institutions, especially those receiving state allocations, to develop a comprehensive articulation agreement that will be applicable across the Commonwealth.
- The Pennsylvania Department of Education convenes the parties and takes responsibility to negotiate such an agreement.

## *Issue 5*

### **Distance Learning**

#### *Issue*

Distance education has become a permanent part of the postsecondary landscape, and yet its potential is only just beginning to be realized. It has great potential to increase access to postsecondary education for people throughout their lives, across their needs and interests, whatever their geographical limitations. It is also a medium that can be easily abused by unscrupulous operators. Educators and regulators in Pennsylvania need to review current policies and practices related to the use of distance education.

#### *Discussion*

Michael Moore, a past director of The American Center for the Study of Distance Education at Penn State, defined distance learning as, “planned learning that normally occurs in a different place from teaching and as a result requires special techniques of course design, special instructional techniques, special methods of communication by electronic and other technology, as well as special organizational and administrative arrangements.”<sup>27</sup> While distance learning is most often associated with courses offered over the Internet, it may also include such methods as web quests, satellite teleconferences, electronic field trips and videoconferencing courses. Web-based components of on-campus classes and such other elements as the use of e-mail as a means of communication between students and faculty participating in an on-campus course, while certainly using techniques of distance technology, are for the purposes of this discussion not considered distance learning.

The National Center for Educational Statistics reports that in 2000-2001, the most recent year for which it has published information, about 2,312 Title-IV eligible, degree granting institutions of higher education were offering one or more distance learning courses, and that over three million students were enrolled in these classes, about half of them community college students. About 90 percent of community colleges were offering such classes then.<sup>28</sup> Today, while there are no official figures, *U.S. News and World Report* quotes one estimate that there are over 3,200 community colleges and four-year colleges and universities in the United States offering distance classes.<sup>29</sup> The numbers of students enrolled in distance learning courses nationwide have apparently never been accurately pinned down, but clearly it is large and growing larger. The dominant force in the sector is the for-profit University of Phoenix, which claims to have enrolled almost 110,000 students in 646 credit-granting online-only courses during 2003-2004.

In Pennsylvania, the state’s community colleges have formed the Pennsylvania Virtual Community College Consortium (PaVCCC), which today offers over 40 diploma, certificate or associate degree programs via the Internet and hundreds of online courses.

The Consortium itself does not offer these credentials; the individual colleges do. Some community colleges, like Westmorland, Bucks and Northampton, are heavily invested in distance learning,<sup>30</sup> while others, like Butler, Highlands and Reading, offer no full programs online.

More recently the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education has formed the Keystone University Network. As with PaVCCC, this entity does not offer programs or courses independently, but facilitates offerings from individual campuses. The Keystone University Network web site lists 34 different programs, most at the graduate level and in education. Again, some campuses, like Mansfield, Clarion, Edinboro and Lock Haven, are more heavily invested in distance education than others.<sup>31</sup>

Penn State University has created what it calls “World Campus” to house its distance learning programs. It offers over 30 programs; the majority are associate level and pre- or post-baccalaureate certificates.<sup>32</sup>

A wholly unscientific review of listings provided by the institutions to *U.S. News* gives further evidence of the dimensions of distance learning within Pennsylvania. The University of Pittsburgh, according to this source, during 2003-2004 offered 149 credit-granting distance education courses, with a total enrollment of 3,282 students. Mansfield offered 70 courses to 3,067 students. Lehigh, with 128 distance education courses, enrolled 1,235 students. The Pennsylvania College of Technology enrolled 1,040 students in 40 courses.

In the 1990’s, studies done of the characteristics of students enrolled in distance education programs described a population that was older than the traditional college age, heavily tilted towards adults with full-time jobs and families to support.<sup>33</sup> All three of those characteristics – (a) adult student with (b) full-time job and (c) family responsibilities – were and are considered risk factors for successful completion of postsecondary learning. And indeed the attrition rate from individual courses was estimated to be 30 percent or even higher.

Today, while there are no more recent authoritative figures from NCES, anecdotal information indicates that this demographic profile may have changed in one significant way. While the typical distance learning student now may still be an adult with a full-time job and family, the growth of baccalaureate and post-baccalaureate offerings, particularly in education and the sciences (see the enrollment figures for Pennsylvania universities above), suggests that students now are increasingly likely to be professionals who are using this mode of learning to advance their careers. Such people are more likely to have the self-discipline and motivation to complete their studies.

### ***Analysis***

There are some states, including Ohio, Michigan, Maryland and Indiana, that in the 1990’s moved to centralize or coordinate their distance learning efforts at the postsecondary level, but most did not. In Pennsylvania, as in most states, distance-

learning opportunities grew at the grass-roots among individual institutions that saw a need – some might say a “market” – within their communities.

Distance learning grew so quickly and, it must be said, for-profit schools and colleges entered the field so early, that there was an initial suspicion on the part of legislators and policymakers of the whole notion of online education. Terms like “any time, any place,” which are popular among some practitioners, reinforced a sense that online education did not have the rigor or discipline of traditional on-campus face-to-face learning.

Certain regulations in Pennsylvania enforced both by the Department of Education and by PHEAA pertaining to distance education reflect those contained in the federal Higher Education Act of 1965, and those regulations in turn reflect this suspicion. More specifically, the HEA denied Title IV financial aid to students in online programs offered by institutions that did not offer at least 50 percent of their courses in brick-and-mortar locations (the “50% rules”), or that fell below a defined week of classroom instruction (the “12-hour rule”), or that deviated from the definition of a full-time student.

The Higher Education Act is slated for reauthorization during the current congressional session. Obviously the outcome cannot be predicted; indeed, the bill was considered last year, and was tabled for other reasons, discussed in an earlier section of this document. However, it is worth noting that Washington in 1998 authorized what is called the “Distance Education Demonstration Program,” to try to determine if easing these various restrictions would in fact lead to the types of abuses lawmakers feared. In 2003, the directors of that demonstration program issued an interim report that states in part:

“The Department [of Education] has uncovered no evidence that waiving the 50% rules, or any of the other rules for which waivers were provided, has resulted in any problems or had negative consequences.... Based upon the experience gained to date.... the Department recognizes the need to amend the laws and regulations governing Title IV student financial assistance in order to expand distance education opportunities.”<sup>34</sup>

Staff within the Department of Education and PHEAA should begin a review of policies and practices currently in place that have the effect of disadvantaging students engaged in distance learning compared to others who are pursuing more traditional educational opportunities.

This is of particular concern because distance learning at least in theory offers an effective alternative pathway for two Pennsylvania populations currently disadvantaged in their access to postsecondary education opportunities, adults working full time and residents of all ages living in rural communities unable to commute to traditional campuses.



Personnel working in rural community education centers have had some experiences now providing online classes to their constituents, working in collaboration with PaVCCC, the Keystone University Network and individual colleges and schools. The results have been mixed, as might be expected; not all people are comfortable working with computers, especially if they did not have regular access to computers in elementary and high school. That can change, both as people get more acclimated to distance learning and as more “personal” models, like interactive videoconferencing, come to augment Internet instruction.

Yet another way in which distance learning can be used to advance public policy goals is found in work being done by the Department of Education’s Bureau of Adult Basic Literacy (ABLE). Distance learning is being used in three ways: to provide services to individuals who would not traditionally come to their programs, to enable students to continue study when factors such as distance or the demands of their lives prevent them from attending classes, and to allow students to increase their instructional hours. Distance learning is available to all students in ABLE-funded programs. Students typically work online using curricula that help them improve their basic skills, prepare for the GED test, increase parenting skills, or develop job-related skills.

The point is that distance learning can provide a valuable tool of opportunity for rural populations and for various groups of working adults. Policymakers should watch its ongoing evolution, try to remove unintended obstacles and perhaps develop policies to foster its growth.

### ***Recommendations***

It is recommended that:

- Regulations and policies that impede the development of distance learning opportunities be reviewed and, where necessary, revised.
- Distance learning be promoted as one means to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of postsecondary education delivery in the Commonwealth. This might include the development of remedial education offerings, the ability to earn college credits in high school, and the expansion of learning options to rural and working adult populations.

## *Issue 6*

### *Master Plan Requirements*

- *Issue*

The Public School Code of 1949 defines the purpose of the Master Plan for Higher Education as *for the guidance of the Governor, General Assembly and all institutions financed wholly or in part from State appropriations*. The legislation that authorizes and describes the requirements for the Master Plan provides that it should define the role for each type of institution (state-owned, state-related, private colleges, etc.), recommend enrollment levels, methods of governance, distribution of State funds, evaluate the status of physical plants and equipment needs and workforce needs. Previous plans offered recommendations centering on mission, academic programs, finance and institutional growth and expansion. Few of the recommendations from these plans over time have been enacted into law, shaped funding priorities, spawned policy initiatives or served as a springboard for revisions in the Board's higher education regulations. Because most of the recommendations in master plans require action by the Governor, the General Assembly, or both, many refer to it as a plan without teeth. The Master Plan is viewed as an advisory document that has limited real impact on state higher education policymaking.

The actual legislation reads as follows:

24 PS 26-2603-B(h)

Every five (5) years, the board shall adopt a master plan for higher education which shall be for the guidance of the Governor, the General Assembly, and all institutions of higher education financed wholly or in part from State appropriations. The master plan shall:

- (1) define the role of each type of institution (State-owned universities, State-related universities, community colleges, private colleges and universities and off-campus centers of any of these and other institutions authorized to grant degrees) in this Commonwealth;
- (2) recommend enrollment levels for each such institution;
- (3) recommend methods for governance;
- (4) recommend methods for the distribution of State funds among the institutions;
- (5) evaluate the status of physical plants and technical equipment and project needs;
- (6) evaluate the status of and projection of manpower needs;
- (7) evaluate enrollment accessibility to institutions of higher learning by the public; and

(8) otherwise provide for an orderly development of institutions of higher education in this Commonwealth.

- ***Discussion***

The legislation that authorizes and describes the requirements for the Master Plan was written in 1963, a time when the Commonwealth and our nation, faced a rapid increase in demand for postsecondary education. In response, the Commonwealth expanded the mission and role of its state colleges, established community colleges and expanded its network of state-related universities. It also created the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency and awarded grants to students to attend private as well as public colleges and universities, recognizing that the state would benefit if the educational capacity in our private colleges and universities.

The purpose of the Master Plan was to bring some sense of order and stability to this rapidly expanding system.

The Commonwealth is now in a period of relatively stability where the short-term challenge may be one of too much capacity, not too little. Although the continuing increases in enrollments by non-traditional students in pursuit of ever changing marketable skills may counter this projection. The focus of state policy is no longer how to provide access to students who can benefit from postsecondary education but rather how can state policy maximize its return on its investment while maintaining accessibility to all citizens who can benefit from such opportunities.

In addition, the resources and capacity of the State Board limit its ability to respond to the current Master Plan legislative requirements in a meaningful way. With limited staff and resource capacity, surveying colleges and universities for their facility needs, developing recommendations for their roles and enrollment levels, distribution of funding, methods of governance and enrollment accessibility is woefully mismatched.

- ***Analysis***

Given the changes that have reshaped the postsecondary landscape over the past two decades and the increasingly rapid pace of change expected to continue in the future, together with the limited capacity of the State Board to thoroughly address these issues, the State Board believes the issues to be addressed in the Master Plan as outlined in the School Code are no longer appropriate.

These provisions were appropriate during a time of expansion and growth. In this period of relative stability where the roles of each sector have reached a state of relative equilibrium, state policy higher education policy is largely developed and expressed through the state budget process. The higher education landscape that existed when the Master Plan requirements were established and today's landscape vary to such a degree that the State Board believes the current Master Plan requirements should be scrapped and replaced with the language or some variation thereof outlined below.

- ***Recommendation***

To appropriately reflect the current higher education landscape and the expertise and capacity that the State Board can contribute in higher education policy, the Board recommends that Section XXVI-B of the Public School Code of 1949 (24 PS 26-2603(B)) should be revised to read as follows:

Every five (5) years, the Board shall adopt a master plan for higher education which shall be for the guidance of the Governor, the General Assembly, and all institutions of higher education financed wholly or in part from State appropriations. The master plan shall:

- (1) Describe the current higher education landscape in the Commonwealth;
- (2) Identify unmet needs and gaps with regard to career fields, geographic and financial access;
- (3) Identify emerging higher education issues and recommend strategies and options designed to address the issues;
- (4) Identify gaps and opportunities for collaboration with basic education, workforce development programs, economic development and other related systems; and,
- (5) Outline a plan for action by the State Board to revise/update its higher education regulations.

## *Endnotes*

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from Master Plan for Higher Education; Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, State Board of Education, Harrisburg, PA, 1986.

<sup>2</sup> Measuring Up 2004: The State Report Card on Higher Education-Pennsylvania. The National Center for Public Policy in Higher Education. San Jose, CA. 2004.

<sup>3</sup> “Profile of Selected Social Characteristics: 2000.” The Web site is at [www.factfinder.census.gov](http://www.factfinder.census.gov).

<sup>4</sup> Measuring Up 2004 – PA, p. 7.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> Wolanin, Thomas R., ed. Reauthorizing the Higher Education Act: Issues and Options. The Institute for Higher Education Policy, Washington, D.C. 2003. p. 11.

<sup>8</sup> Quoted in Colbeck, Carol L., “Critical Issues in Pennsylvania Higher Education: Financing Higher Education.” Paper prepared for Council on Higher Education, 12/31/01, p. 3.

<sup>9</sup> “How Do Poor Kids Succeed in College? The Role and Impact of Federal TRIO Programs.” American Youth Policy Forum. Its Web site is [www.aypf.org/forumbriefs/2003](http://www.aypf.org/forumbriefs/2003)

<sup>10</sup> The Web site for the Pennsylvania Association of TRIO Programs is [www.trio.org/Pennsylvania](http://www.trio.org/Pennsylvania)

<sup>11</sup> “How Can Colleges Prove They’re Doing Their Jobs?” The Chronicle of Higher Education. September 3, 2004.

<sup>12</sup> “Facing Up and Moving Forward: Mobilizing a National Policy Capacity to Address Student Learning in Higher Education.” Conference Report, October 6-7, 2004, Wingspread Conference Center, Racine, WI. The Business – Higher Education Forum. p. 4.

<sup>13</sup> Nancy Sherlock, Executive Director, Institute for Higher Education Leadership and Policy, in “How Can Colleges Prove They’re Doing Their Jobs?”

<sup>14</sup> “Facing Up and Moving Forward,” p. 8.

<sup>15</sup> *ibid*, p. 6.

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<sup>16</sup> Charles R. Reed, Chancellor, California State University System, and Edward B. Rust, Jr., Chairman and CEO, State Farm Insurance Cos., in “How Can Colleges Prove They’re Doing Their Jobs?”

<sup>17</sup> State Higher Education Executive Officers Web site, [www.sheeo.org](http://www.sheeo.org). Search results for keyword “Accountability”

<sup>18</sup> See the Web site at <http://www.passhe.edu/content/?/performance>

<sup>19</sup> “Facing Up,” p. 8: “Improved accountability will require active cultivation of multiple stakeholders to strengthen the audience for state public policy. Governors in particular are uniquely well positioned to lead discussions within their states, involving the business community and civic leaders in these discussions.”

<sup>20</sup> This issue may soon be taken out of the states’ hands. One of the issues under consideration in connection with the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act of 1965 would be the requirement that all enrollment data would be submitted by institutions at the unit record level.

<sup>21</sup> Remedial Education at Degree-Granting Postsecondary Institutions in Fall 2000: Statistical Analysis. U.S. Department of Education. National Center for Education Statistics. Washington, D.C. 2003

<sup>22</sup> *ibid*, p. v.

<sup>23</sup> Phipps, R. College Remediation: What It Is, What It Costs, What’s At Stake. Institute for Higher Education Policy. Washington, D.C. 1998

<sup>24</sup> The Condition of Education, 2001. U.S. Department of Education. National Center for Educational Statistics. Washington, D.C. p. 40.

<sup>25</sup> “Postsecondary Remedial Education.” National Conference of State Legislatures. See the Web site a [www.ncsl.org/programs/educ/RemedEd.htm](http://www.ncsl.org/programs/educ/RemedEd.htm)

<sup>26</sup> Camara, Wayne J. College Persistence, Graduation and Remediation. The College Board Research Notes, March, 2003.

<sup>27</sup> Horn, Laura, Kajaku, Lawrence K., and Carroll, C. Dennis. High School Academic Curriculum and the Persistence Path Through College: Statistical Analysis Report. U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Educational Statistics. Washington, D.C. August, 2001.

<sup>28</sup> Moore, Michael, and Kearsley, Greg. Distance Education: A Systems View. Wadsworth Publishing Company. CA. 1996.

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<sup>29</sup> The Condition of Education 2004 in Brief. U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Educational Statistics. Washington, D.C. 2004. p. 18

<sup>30</sup> See the Web site at [www.usnews.com/usnews/edu/elearning](http://www.usnews.com/usnews/edu/elearning).

<sup>31</sup> See the Web site at <http://www.pavcc.org/about.htm>

<sup>32</sup> See the Web site at <http://www.keystoneu.net/>

<sup>33</sup> See the Web site at <http://www.worldcampus.psu.edu/pub/index.shtml>

<sup>34</sup> Sikora, Anna C. and Carroll, C. Dennis. A Profile of Participation in Distance Education: 1999-2000. U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Educational Statistics. Washington, D.C. 2002.

<sup>35</sup> U.S. Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education, Office of Policy, Planning and Innovation, *Second Report to Congress on the Distance Education Demonstration Program, July 2003*, Washington, D.C., 20006. p. iv.

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**Degree-Granting Institutions of Higher Education in Pennsylvania**  
(Branch Campuses Are Identified Where Applicable)

**Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education**

Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania	Kutztown University of Pennsylvania
California University of Pennsylvania	Lock Haven University of Pennsylvania Clearfield Campus
Cheyney University of Pennsylvania	Mansfield University of Pennsylvania
Clarion University of Pennsylvania Venango Campus	Millersville University of Pennsylvania
East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania	Shippensburg University of Pennsylvania
Edinboro University of Pennsylvania	Slippery Rock University of Pennsylvania
Indiana University of Pennsylvania Armstrong Campus Punxsutawney Campus	West Chester University of Pennsylvania

**State Related Universities**

Lincoln University	Wilkes-Barre Campus
Temple University	Worthington Scranton Campus
Ambler Campus	York Campus
The Pennsylvania State University	Penn College of Technology-PSU Affiliate
Abington	
Allentown Campus	University of Pittsburgh
Altoona Campus	Bradford Campus
Beaver Campus	Greensburg Campus
Behrend College	Johnstown Campus
Berks Campus - Fogelsville	Titusville Campus
-Reading	
Capital College-Harrisburg	
-Schuylkill	
Delaware Campus	
Dickinson School of Law	
DuBois Campus	
Fayette Campus	
Hazleton Campus	
Great Valley Center for Graduate Studies	
McKeesport Campus	
Mont Alto Campus	
New Kensington Campus	
Ogontz Campus	
School of Medicine-Hershey	
Schuylkill Campus	
Shenango Valley Campus	



## College of Technology

Thaddeus Stevens College of Technology	
<b>Independent Colleges and Universities</b>	
Albright College	Immaculata University
Allegheny College	
Alvernia College	Johnson College
American College	Juniata College
Arcadia University	
Art Institute of Philadelphia	Keystone College
Art Institute of Pittsburgh	King's College
Baptist Bible College and Seminary	Lackawanna College
Biblical Theological Seminary	Lafayette College
Bryn Athyn College of the New Church	Lake Erie College School of Osteopathic Medicine
Bryn Mawr College	Lancaster Bible College
Bucknell University	Lancaster General College of Nursing
Byzantine Catholic Seminary	Lancaster Theological Seminary
	LaRoche College
Cabrini College	Lebanon Valley College
Calvary Baptist Theological Seminary	Lehigh University
Carlow College	Lehigh Valley College
Carnegie-Mellon University	Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg
Cedar Crest College	Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia
Central Pennsylvania College	Lycoming College
Chatham College	LaSalle University
Chestnut Hill College	
Christ the Savior Seminary	Manor College
College Misericordia	Marywood University
Curtis Institute of Music	Mercyhurst College
	Messiah College
Delaware Valley College	Moore College of Art & Design
DeSales University	Moravian College/Theo Seminary
Dickinson College	Mt. Aloysius College
Drexel University	Muhlenberg College
Duquesne University	
	Neumann College
Eastern University	
Elizabethtown College	Peirce College
Evangelical School of Theology	Pennsylvania College of Optometry
	Pennsylvania College of Podiatric Medicine
Franklin and Marshall College	Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts
	Pennsylvania College of Art & Design
Gannon University	Pennsylvania Institute of Technology
Geneva College	Philadelphia Biblical University
Gettysburg College	Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine
Gratz College	Philadelphia University
Grove City College	Pittsburgh Technical Institute
Gwynedd-Mercy College	Pittsburgh Theological Seminary
	Point Park College
Harcum College	
Harrisburg University of Science & Technology	Reconstructionist Rabbinical College

Haverford College	Reformed Episcopal Seminary
Holy Family University	Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary

### Independent Colleges and Universities Continued

Robert Morris University	
Rosemont College	Valley Forge Christian College
	Valley Forge Military College
St. Charles Borromeo Seminary	Villa Maria College
St. Francis University	Villanova University
St. Joseph's University	
St. Tikhon's Orthodox Theological Seminary	Walnut Hill College
St. Vincent College	Washington and Jefferson College
St. Vincent Seminary	Waynesburg College
Seton Hill University	Westminster College
Susquehanna University	Westminster Theological Seminary
Swarthmore College	Widener University
	Harrisburg Campus
Thiel College	Wilkes University
Thomas Jefferson University	Wilson College
Trinity Episcopal School of Ministry	Won Institute of Graduate Studies
The University of the Arts	York College of Pennsylvania
University of Pennsylvania	
University of the Sciences in Philadelphia	
University of Scranton	
Ursinus College	

### Community Colleges

Bucks County Community College	Lehigh County Community College
Upper County Campus	Luzerne County Community College
Butler County Community College	Montgomery County Community College
Community College of Allegheny County	West Campus
Community College of Beaver County	Northampton County Community College
Community College of Philadelphia	Monroe Campus
Delaware County Community College	Pennsylvania Highlands Community College
Harrisburg Area Community College	Reading Area Community College
Gettysburg Campus	Westmoreland County Community College
Lancaster Campus	
Lebanon Campus	

### Specialized Associate Degree-Granting Institutions

Academy of Medical Arts and Business	McCann Sch of Bus & Tech/Mc
Allied Medical & Technical Institute	McCann Sch of Bus/Pottsville
Antonelli Institute	McCann School of Business & Technology
	McCann School of Business & Technology
Berean Institute	Median School of Allied Health Careers
Berks Technical Institute	Metropolitan Career Center
Bidwell Training Center, Inc.	
Bradford School	New Castle School of Trades
Bradley Academy for the Visual Arts	Newport Business Institute/Lower Burrel
Bucks Co Sch of Beauty Culture	Newport Business Institute/Williamsport
Business Institute of PA/Meadville	North Central Industrial Tech Ed Center
Business Institute of PA/Sharon	
Cittone Institute/Market	Oakbridge Academy of Arts
	Orleans Technical Institute/Walnut Street
Cittone Institute/Plymouth	
Consolidated School of Business/Lancaster	Pace Institute
Consolidated School of Business/York	Penn Commercial, Inc.
	Pennco Tech
Dean Institute of Technology	PA Institute of Culinary Arts, Inc.
Douglas Education Center	PA School of Business
Dubois Business College/Dubois	Pittsburgh Institute of Aeronautics
Dubois Business College/Huntingdon	Pittsburgh Inst-Mortuary SCI
Dubois Business College/Oil City	PJA School
Duffs Business Institute	
	Rosedale Technical Institute
Education Direct	
Electronic Institute/Middletown	Schuylkill Institute of Business & Technol.
Erie Business Center	South Hills Sch of Bus Tech/State College
Erie Business Center South	South Hills Sch of Bus Tech/Altoona
Erie Institute of Technology	
	Thompson Institute/Philadelphia
Hbg. Institute of Trade & Technology, Inc.	Thompson Institute/Harrisburg
Hussian School of Art, Inc.	Triangle Tech, Inc.
	Triangle Tech, Inc./DuBois
ICM Sch Of Business & Medical Careers	Triangle Tech, Inc./Erie
International Academy of Design & Tech.	Triangle Tech, Inc./Greensburg
ITT Technical Institute/Bensalem	Triangle Tech, Inc./Pittsburgh
ITT Technical Institute/King of Prussia	Tri-State Business Institute
ITT Technical Institute/Mechanicsburg	
ITT Technical Institute/Monroeville	Welder Training and Testing Institute
ITT Technical Institute/Pittsburgh	West Virginia Career Institute
	Western Sch of Health & Bus Careers, Inc.
JNA Marketing, Inc.	Williamson Free Sch/Mech Trade
	Winner Institute of Arts & Sciences
Katharine Gibb School of Phila., LLC	
	York Technical Institute
Lansdale School of Business	York Technical Institute/Lancaster

Laurel Business Institute	Yorktowne Business Institute
Lincoln Technical Institute/Allentown	
Lion Investigation Academy	

**Approved Out-of-State Institutions**

Allegany College of Maryland	Strayer University-Delware Cty Campus
Alliance Theological Seminary	Strayer University-King of Prussia Campus
Annenberg Foundation, The	Strayer University-Lower Bucks Cty Campus
Assemblies of God Theological Seminary	Touro College
Bethany Theological Seminary	Universidad Del Turabo
Dallas Theological Seminary	University of Phoenix
DeVry University-Center City Center	University of Phoenix-Concordville
DeVry University-Greater Philadelphia	University of Phoenix-Cranberry Lrng Ctr
DeVry University-Pittsburgh Center	University of Phoenix-Phila. Airport
Dixon University Center	University of Phoenix-Philadelphia
Drew University	University of Phoenix-Four Points Hotels Sheraton
Eastern Mennonite University-Lancaster	University of Phoenix-Hotel Sofitel
Eastern Mennonite University	University of Phoenix-Lower Bucks County Learning Center
Episcopal Divinity School	University of Phoenix-Monroeville Learning Center
Gallaudet University	University of Phoenix-Park Ridge Hotel
Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary	University of Phoenix-Philadelphia Bar Association
Hagerstown Community College	University of Phoenix-Phila. Campus
Jamestown Community College	University of Phoenix-Phila. Financial Dist
Loyola University New Orleans	University of Phoenix-Quest Diagnostics
McDaniel College	University of Phoenix-Radisson Pittsburgh
Mountain State University	University of Phoenix-Renaissance Hotel
Nova Southeastern University-Main	University of Phoenix-Robinson/Main Learning Center
Nova Southeastern University-Bucks Cty	University of Phoenix-Sheraton Bucks County
Nova Southeastern University-Greater Philadelphia	University of Saint Francis
Nova Southeastern University-King of Prussia	West Virginia University
Nova Southeastern University-Williamsport	
Oklahoma Baptist University	
Potomac College	
San Francisco Theological Seminary	
Southern Baptist Theological Seminary	
St. Bonaventure University	

