Pennsylvania’s Public Universities

Established by statute in 1982 (Act 188) the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education comprises 14 universities, located in every region of the Commonwealth. With its current enrollment of about 112,000 students, the System is the largest provider of higher education opportunities in Pennsylvania.

While the universities share a common mission—to offer the highest quality education at an affordable cost to students and their families—each also embraces specific spheres of excellence. For more information on each campus go to www.passhe.edu and click on “Where Should I Go?”

Like so many public university systems in the country, PASSHE is facing a unique combination of internal and external forces that are reshaping almost every aspect of life on the campuses. This transition is being influenced by a host of factors, including national trends toward greater accountability, changes in leadership, shifting demographic patterns in the Commonwealth, a rapidly evolving academic world driven by technology and open content and continuing financial challenges.

PASSHE is responding as it always has, looking for the best ways to serve students while addressing the needs of both employers and the Commonwealth.

Governance

System wide policy and operational oversight are the responsibility of a 20-member Board of Governors, which comprises 11 individuals appointed by the governor and confirmed by the state Senate; three students, also confirmed by the Senate; a representative of each of the four caucuses in the Legislature; the governor or a designee; and the secretary of education or a designee.

In addition to broad policy powers, other primary responsibilities of the Board include the appointment of the chancellor and the university presidents, and the setting of tuition rates.

The Office of the Chancellor, located in Harrisburg at the Dixon University Center, is the central headquarters for the System. The chancellor, with the aid of professional staff, is responsible for the administration of PASSHE under the policies prescribed by the Board.

Each university has an 11-member council of trustees, which carries out Board policy and deals with a variety of local issues. The chancellor is an ex-officio member of each council.
Academic Programs

PASSHE universities provide more than 250 degree and certificate programs in more than 120 areas of study, as well as a full range of workforce training and lifelong learning opportunities. The highest enrolled programs include those in the areas of business and finance, health care, technology and education.

Last year, the General Assembly unanimously adopted a package of bills labeled the “Higher Education Modernization Act,” which was the first major revision in statutes governing the system since its creation. The legislation provides all PASSHE universities enhanced opportunities for technology transfer and research, expanded fund raising powers and the ability to offer applied doctorates.

Indiana University of Pennsylvania (IUP) has the authority to offer research doctorates (Ph.D.s). Other PASSHE universities also may offer Ph.D. programs in conjunction with IUP or with any other institution chartered to award such degrees.

The universities are fully accredited by the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools. Academic programs are individually accredited by appropriate national organizations.

Enrollment

About 112,000 undergraduate and graduate, part-time and full-time, students attend PASSHE universities. Nearly 90 percent are Pennsylvania residents, and 80 percent of recent bachelor’s degree alumni remain in the state after graduation for their first job or to continue their education. In addition, PASSHE universities offer a variety of non-credit, job-training programs, often in conjunction with businesses in their local communities.

Facilities

The total university campus comprises more than 4,698 acres. A total of 862 buildings (24,999,533 square feet) house classrooms, residences, administrative offices and student support services.

The libraries on each campus provide resource support for academic programs and are connected electronically by the Keystone Library Network (KLN). The KLN provides students and staff access to the combined holdings of the 14 universities’ libraries, which number in the millions, and allows them to use the Internet to conduct research day or night from any location. It also gives them access to library assistance late into the evening through e-mail and a toll-free number.

Alumni

There are more than 652,000 PASSHE alumni, including nearly 500,000 who live in Pennsylvania.

Employees

PASSHE employs more than 12,000 professional and support staff, most covered by collective bargaining agreements, making it the 13th largest employer in the state.

Costs

Tuition at System universities is $6,622 per year for Pennsylvania undergraduate students and from $9,934 to $16,556 per year for nonresident students. The graduate student tuition is $442 per credit hour, Pennsylvania, and $663 per credit, out-of-state. Resident students also pay a $368-a-year instructional technology fee; nonresidents, $558. Board and room charges vary, as do local fees. Students may apply for a variety of state and federal financial assistance programs, and campus scholarships, grants and loans.

The Dixon University Center, a campus of six buildings, is the home of the Office of the Chancellor, the central headquarters for the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education. Besides administrative offices, the Dixon University Center also has classroom space, conference facilities and a meeting room for PASSHE’s Board of Governors.