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Lt. Gov. Austin Davis Highlights Need for New Blueprint for Higher Education at Erie County Community College

Shapiro-Davis Budget Invests \$975 Million into State System Universities and Community Colleges to Create a New System Focused on Workforce Development, Grounded in Access & Affordability

Erie, PA – Lt. Gov. Austin Davis stopped by Erie County Community College today to highlight the Shapiro-Davis Administration's new blueprint for higher education and proposed 15 percent increase in funding for community colleges and the state system universities, which serve more than 300,000 students across the Commonwealth.

"Governor Shapiro and I believe that every Pennsylvanian deserves the freedom to chart their own course and the opportunity to succeed," said Davis. "A stronger higher education system is key to Pennsylvania's future. Our community colleges and state-owned universities are doing great work — but they've been doing it without the support and resources they need coming from Harrisburg and without a broader strategic vision to ensure those resources are utilized effectively. That's why the Shapiro-Davis Administration has created a new blueprint for higher education. It's designed to help students build the skills and gain the credentials they need to fill good-paying jobs, ensure employers can find the skilled workers their businesses need to grow and thrive, and serve as an engine for our Commonwealth's economic success, setting us up for growth and prosperity for decades to come."

[The Shapiro-Davis budget](#) invests \$975 million into a new governance system that combines Pennsylvania's 15 community colleges and the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PASSHE) universities. That investment represents a 15 percent increase over last year's state budget for the state-owned universities and community colleges. This year's proposal also includes a 5 percent increase in institutional support for the Commonwealth's state-related universities – Penn State, Temple, Lincoln and Pitt — while ensuring greater accountability for taxpayer dollars to ensure the Commonwealth pays for performance.

By working together as a united force, PASSHE and the community colleges will be able to create pathways to affordable credentials and degrees that students can access throughout their lifetimes, improve coordination between schools and serve as the most affordable higher education option for Pennsylvania students.

"Education is the key to a bright future, not only for families but our overall economy," said state Rep. Ryan Bizzarro. "I am committed to work with the Governor and Lieutenant Governor to protect and expand this historic investment in institutions like Erie County Community College."

Under the new system, Pennsylvanians making up to the median income (about \$70,000 annually) will pay no more than \$1,000 in tuition and fees per semester at state-owned universities and community colleges. To help students attending state-related universities and independent colleges, the plan will also increase Pennsylvania State Grants for all students by \$1,000.

“Erie County Community College is serving 540 students and giving students the skills needed to find work right here in Erie County,” said Dr. Chris Gray, president of Erie County Community College. “EC3 is proof of the concept that investment in education benefits all. Our graduates are finding family-sustaining jobs right here in our community and others are transferring to our local universities.”

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