



GOVERNOR JOSH SHAPIRO

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Governor Shapiro Tours Community College of Allegheny County, Highlights How New Blueprint for Higher Education and Proposed Budget Will Give Students the Freedom to Chart Their Own Course

After a year of working with higher education leaders across the Commonwealth, Governor Shapiro unveiled his higher education blueprint to ensure Pennsylvania students have the freedom to chart their own course and the opportunity to succeed.

After 30 years of disinvestment, Pennsylvania ranks 49th in the nation for investment in higher education – and the Governor believes inaction is unacceptable.

Governor Shapiro's plan will ensure higher education is an economic driver for Pennsylvania, prepares workers for the future, and addresses workforce shortages.



Pittsburgh, PA – Today, **Governor Josh Shapiro** toured the Community College of Allegheny County (CCAC) with local and legislative leaders to learn about how CCAC is giving students the freedom to chart their own course to successful careers and addressing critical workforce needs in Pennsylvania.

Governor Shapiro and his Administration are currently working with higher education institutions and leaders to build out the Governor's [new blueprint](#) for higher education. After today's tour, the Governor and local leaders highlighted the need to take action and create more opportunities for Pennsylvania students, giving them the freedom to chart their own course while driving economic growth and prosperity for our Commonwealth.

"There are many paths to success and prosperity in this Commonwealth. Some of our students will go straight into the workforce or an apprenticeship, some might go into the military, and some will go to college. We need to respect each of those paths – and invest in them, because every Pennsylvanian deserves the freedom to chart their own course and the opportunity to succeed," said **Governor Josh Shapiro**. "It's time to build on this new blueprint for higher education in Pennsylvania and leave a lasting legacy on this Commonwealth. If we can take action to ensure Pennsylvanians receive a great education, from Pre-K through an apprenticeship program all the way to college, and if we can give Pennsylvanians the freedom to chart their own course and the opportunity to succeed – we will build a better future for our Commonwealth."

"The Community College of Allegheny County's mission is predicated on providing affordable, accessible high-quality education for all members of our community, and we share the Governor's enthusiasm and commitment to helping Pennsylvanians acquire the education and training they need to realize their full potential," said **CCAC President Quintin Bullock**.

"As the Governor said just about a year ago at his first budget address – higher education in Pennsylvania isn't working. The Governor's blueprint is a bold plan to make this vision a reality, but this vision did not take shape in a vacuum – and the process of fleshing it out is not taking place in a vacuum either," said **Kate Shaw, PDE Deputy Secretary and Commissioner for Postsecondary and Higher Education**. "Since last March, I've had the honor of gathering input from lots of folks to contribute to a shared vision of what would work best in Pennsylvania. The Higher Education Workgroup was formed at the request of Governor Shapiro and was comprised of leaders from all four of our higher education sectors, and I have also met with a wide range of legislators to gain their insight and input as the plan was being developed. As we continue to talk about the plan and seek input, we are also visiting colleges and universities across the Commonwealth to understand the strengths of our public colleges and universities and imagine how the Blueprint will further strengthen and expand their reach and impact."

In January, Governor Shapiro unveiled his [new blueprint](#) for higher education in Pennsylvania – focused on competitiveness and workforce development and grounded in access and affordability. Under the Governor's plan, higher education will serve as an economic driver for Pennsylvania, prepare workers for the future, and address workforce shortages by:

- Creating a new system to address Pennsylvania's needs that unites our PASSHE universities and 15 community colleges under a new governance system.
- Increasing access and affordability, including ensuring Pennsylvanians making up to the median income pay no more than \$1,000 in tuition and fees per semester at state-owned universities and community colleges.
- Increasing transparency and improving outcomes by proposing that investments in publicly funded colleges and universities be distributed on the basis of a predictable, transparent, outcomes-focused formula that will incentivize colleges and universities to focus on what's most important to the Commonwealth.

"CCAC's new advanced manufacturing and IT training programs are just one example of how creative higher education initiatives will define the jobs of the future. However, our current system is not providing quality, affordable education to everyone – and this needs to change," said **Allegheny County Executive Sara Innamorato**. "To address this issue, we need to work together with partners like Governor Shapiro, CCAC President Quintin Bullock, and local educators who are committed to shaping a clear vision for the future of higher education. Governor Shapiro's visionary plan to double

Pennsylvania's spending on higher education would lift us from 49th in the nation to 22nd in just five years. Prioritizing higher education will help young people stay in Pennsylvania, find good paying-jobs, and foster economic prosperity across the state and here in Allegheny County.”

“Governor, I want to thank you because I think it takes a whole lot of courage to say: we’re 48 out of 50 in affordability – and even at 48 out of 50, I am not just going to sit back and let that happen. I am going to create substantial change to give these kids of the next generation the opportunity to succeed and not look at 48 but look at 1 and be great,” said **Pittsburgh Mayor Ed Gainey**.

“I am a proud alumnus of a community college and a state system school, as well as a longtime trustee and treasurer at the Community College of Allegheny Count. As such, I am so proud to be joining Governor Shapiro to champion a plan that will make these institutions more accessible to Pennsylvania’s learners,” said **Senator Jay Costa**. “We must continue to reduce barriers to higher education and deliver funding that supports our students, educators, and staff. The governor’s higher education plan prepares our young people to enter and excel in fields that are in high demand in our commonwealth while easing the financial burdens too often faced by working families. I’m delighted to support this fantastic step in the right direction, and I look forward to bringing all parties to the table to get it done.”

"As chairman of the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency, I see firsthand the need for this kind of substantial and thoughtful investment to address affordability. We need to get something done this year,” said **Senator Wayne Fontana**. "When we get back to Harrisburg, the Senate Democrats will be fighting for every Pennsylvanian that wants to pursue a higher education to have the opportunity to do so.”

“The higher education component of the Governor’s budget proposal is laser focused on keeping college affordable and connecting graduates with careers that will best serve them in the next phase of their lives and the Commonwealth as a whole,” said **Representative Aerion Abney**. “I look forward to working with my colleagues on the Appropriations Committee to secure these critical provisions and more.”

Pennsylvania currently ranks 48th for affordability and 49th for state investment in higher education – and Governor Shapiro knows we must take action to improve access and opportunity for Pennsylvania students. His [2024-25 budget proposal](#) makes investments to prepare workers for the future, address workforce shortages, create a new system that unites our PASSHE universities and 15 community colleges, increases access, affordability, transparency, and invests in outcomes.

To support this new system and address the historic lack of investment in Pennsylvania’s higher education system, the Governor’s budget proposes:

- **\$975 million** in this new governance system that unites our community colleges and PASSHE schools – a 15 percent increase in the state investment in state-owned universities, community colleges, and the students they serve.
- Recommends an increase in financial aid for students who attend the schools under the new governance system, so that Pennsylvanians making up to the median income will pay **no more than \$1,000** in tuition and fees per semester beginning in FY2025-26.
- Increases Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency (PHEAA) state grants by **\$1,000** for eligible students from a family that makes up to the median income, bringing the maximum award up from \$5,750 to \$6,750 beginning in FY2025-26.
- Invests **\$279 million** annually starting in FY2025-26 so Pennsylvania students can attend college in-state with a limited debt load after they graduate and can enter the workforce ready to start their careers and build a future in our Commonwealth.

“I have a degree in Electrical engineering with a minor in electronics and yet I am pursuing an associate degree in CCAC,” said **CCAC student Anene Otubelu**. “Once I graduate from CCAC, I plan to work for a manufacturing company here in the Pittsburgh area – I want to put my skills to work helping to maintain the machines that drive their work and bring prosperity to our region. I’m glad the Governor’s blueprint for higher education will make it easier for more students to get a great education at a college like CCAC.”

“We could not be happier about Governor Shapiro’s enhanced focus on higher education,” said **Majestic Lane, chief equity officer at the Allegheny Conference on Community Development**. “Our slate of higher education institutions – collectively offering a diversity of pathways from certificates to PhDs and everything in between – is an incredible asset with the power to fuel growth in southwestern Pennsylvania and across the commonwealth. A skilled and ready workforce is critical to compete for and win business investment, and our academic institutions are responding to the need to keep the talent pipeline full. The Allegheny Conference supports investment in post-secondary education and stands behind initiatives to create and maintain a variety of options that will provide our residents with the skills and training to contribute to and benefit from being part of a dynamic, future-focused workforce.”

“This place represents more than just a facility of higher learning – it represents a beacon for a chance that no matter where you come from, no matter what your financial story is, no matter what your career choice is in the future, you can succeed. I would be remiss if I didn’t speak about the great partnership that CCAC has with our skilled trades. These types of partnerships create so many opportunities for apprentices to chart their own path to success, like so many of you are doing right now,” said **Darrin Kelly, President of the Allegheny-Fayette Labor Council**. “Governor – once again,

you've proven that no matter what agenda you put forth, the most important thing you always do is invest in Pennsylvania's greatest asset: its people.”

For more information on how Governor Shapiro’s blueprint for higher education and proposed budget will create opportunity for Pennsylvanians and build affordable pathways to a college education, visit shapirobudget.pa.gov.

To learn more about the Governor’s blueprint and view answers to frequently asked questions, click [here](#).

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