



# GOVERNOR JOSH SHAPIRO

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**Governor Shapiro and Secretary Mumin Visit Reading Area  
Community College, Share How Higher Education Blueprint Will  
Create Opportunity for Accessible and Affordable Options for  
Students**

*Governor Shapiro unveiled his higher education blueprint in January after working with higher education leaders from across the Commonwealth to improve access and opportunity for Pennsylvania students.*

*Governor Shapiro believes that now is the time to invest – and his plan ensures higher education will be an economic driver for Pennsylvania, support students, and address workforce shortages while maintaining Pennsylvania's \$14 billion surplus.*



**Reading, PA** – Today, **Governor Josh Shapiro** and **Secretary of Education Dr. Khalid Mumin** toured Reading Area Community College (RACC) with **Senator Judy Schwank** to learn how RACC is giving students the freedom to chart their own course to successful careers and addressing critical workforce needs – like the lack of nurses – 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. Governor Shapiro and Secretary Mumin highlighted RACC's focus on high-need fields like nursing and its commitment to serving first-generation students, especially from Pennsylvania's growing Latino community.

"After 30 years of disinvestment, too many of our colleges and universities are running on empty, and not enough students have affordable pathways through college and into good jobs. Pennsylvania currently ranks 49th for state investment in higher education, and 48th in higher education affordability. I want to be number one on that list – not number 49," said **Governor Josh Shapiro**. "My blueprint for higher education will create opportunity for Pennsylvania students and families and drive economic growth and prosperity in our communities. I know some folks look at my plan and say it's too bold and that we can't afford it right now. But I say we can't afford not to invest right now – we have a \$14 billion surplus, and we are facing real challenges in education and with our workforce that will hold us back in the future if we don't take action right now. It's time to build on this new blueprint for higher education in Pennsylvania and leave a lasting legacy on this Commonwealth."

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.

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. To support this new system and address the historic lack of investment in Pennsylvania’s higher education system, the Governor’s [2024-25 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.

“With his new Blueprint for Higher Education, Governor Shapiro intends to help Pennsylvania’s postsecondary institutions to collaborate and innovate on behalf of current and future learners,” said **Secretary of Education Dr. Khalid N. Mumin**. “By giving learners the ability to chart their own course, we enable them to build their future on their own terms. By giving learners access to affordable postsecondary options aligned to workforce needs, we are providing them with infinite possibilities of success.”

“I believe in the promise of public education and that every student deserves the opportunity to chase their dreams and pursue their happiness in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Thanks to the bold leadership of Governor Shapiro, we now have a proposal that aims to modernize higher education in Pennsylvania, and it’s a much-needed initiative,” said **Senator Judy Schwank**. “There is a lot of hard work ahead, and I’m excited to partner with the Shapiro Administration to develop a public higher education system that effectively meets the needs of our students and the communities they call home.”

“I am looking forward to working with Governor Shapiro and his administration in helping students attain an affordable college education, while balancing the financial needs of the Commonwealth,” said **Dr. Susan Looney, president of Reading Area Community College**. “As always at Reading Area Community College, our first priority is, and will always remain, advancing the positive outcomes of our students and their families; and preparing them for successful careers in the workforce.”

“During my time at RACC, I have loved every minute of it and take pride in being able to attend this school every day. RACC provided me with these opportunities of growth that would not have been possible without it, and I am incredibly grateful for that. When the Governor and Secretary of Education come to town to visit a school that doesn't get enough recognition, it makes a buzz,” said **RACC student Jonathan Pensado**. “For you gentlemen, the consensus was very positive. And it's for a reason, you stand on the side of education, the side of human rights, and Governor Shapiro makes TikToks which is pretty cool.”

“My journey at RACC started a few years back. I was nervous to start because like many Latinos that come to the United States of America, I knew little to no English, not enough to hold a conversation. I decided that I must leave the fear and start because I wanted to do better, make my family proud, and more importantly make myself proud. I took ESL classes, and after completing them, I went on to do the prerequisites classes to be able to apply to become an Licensed Nurse Practitioner after completing my semesters and graduating,” said **RACC student Wilfri Peña Rodriguez**. “I am currently in my last semester of Nursing and am on my way to becoming a Registered Nurse. RACC has been fundamental in my journey. I will forever be grateful for the encouragement, guidance, and opportunities that I've received from teachers, staff, and friends that I've made along the way.”

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](https://shapirobudget.pa.gov).

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

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