



# GOVERNOR JOSH SHAPIRO

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**MEDIA CONTACT:**

Governor's Press Office, [ra-gvgovpress@pa.gov](mailto:ra-gvgovpress@pa.gov)

## **During Visit to West Chester University, Governor Shapiro Highlights How Higher Education Blueprint Will Spur Economic Growth and Workforce Development**

*Governor Shapiro and his Administration are regularly meeting with higher education, labor, and legislative leaders to build out the blueprint and create a system to support students, invest in workforce development, and propel our economy forward.*

*Governor Shapiro's balanced budget responsibly invests in Pennsylvanians now – and his higher education plan increases access and affordability for students while maintaining Pennsylvania's \$14 billion surplus.*





**West Chester, PA** – Today, **Governor Josh Shapiro** toured West Chester University (WCU) with **PDE Deputy Secretary of Education and Higher Education Commissioner Kate Shaw**, **Representative Chris Pielli**, **Chester County Commissioner Marian Moskowitz**, and WCU leadership and students to learn how WCU is giving students the freedom to chart their own course to successful careers and addressing critical workforce needs in Pennsylvania. Governor Shapiro met with students from the College of Education and Social Work to learn about how WCU is training students in special education, elementary and middle school education, and music education to prepare the next generation of educators and help rebuild Pennsylvania’s teacher workforce.

In January, Governor Shapiro [unveiled his 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:

- Building a new public system for higher education that unites 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.
- Reinvesting in our publicly-funded colleges and universities via a predictable, transparent funding formula that will align state dollars with the needs of the Commonwealth.

WCU is helping expand Pennsylvania’s education workforce by preparing students for careers in special, music, and elementary and middle school education by offering dual-enrollment classes in

teacher education through WCU at no cost and partnering with local school districts to expedite the process for students to become special education teachers.

"I've said it before, and I'll say it again: there are many paths to success in our Commonwealth. Some of our students will go straight into the workforce, some will participate in a union apprenticeship, some will go into the military – and some will go straight to college like the West Chester University students I met today. We need to respect each of those paths equally – and invest in all of them," said **Governor Josh Shapiro**. "I know some folks look at my higher education plan and say it's too bold. Some are upset that it's a blueprint – one we're actively building on with higher education leaders, labor leaders, legislative leaders, and stakeholders right now. We're trying to do this right by bringing all our best ideas to the table to build a system that will support Pennsylvania students and families and grow our economy for decades to come. If we can give Pennsylvanians the freedom to chart their own course and the opportunity to succeed, then economic opportunity will follow."

"I am delighted and proud to be working at the side of Governor Shapiro to put a new, bold, comprehensive vision in place called the blueprint for higher education," said **PDE Deputy Secretary and Higher Education Commissioner Kate Shaw**. "We worked with many stakeholders throughout the entire year of 2023 to ask the question of how we can solve the problems we are facing in higher education. We are working with higher education leaders across the Commonwealth from every sector - from community colleges, state related institutions, PASSHE institutions, and the independents - and continue to ask them those questions and work with them. We have spoken with legislators, business leaders, and additional stakeholders, and we took that input to develop this blueprint to address affordability, reinvest in our institutions and students, and coordinate how we deliver higher education - and we will continue having these conversations."

As college grows more expensive, enrollment is dropping, and college attainment rates are below the national average in 56 of Pennsylvania's 67 counties, Pennsylvania currently ranks 48th for affordability and 49th for state investment in higher education. Governor Shapiro understands that we must take action now to improve access and opportunity for Pennsylvania students and boldly address the chronic challenges facing higher education. 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.

"Any time we can make higher education more affordable and accessible for more Pennsylvanians, we're going positively impact our communities and economy. The governor's blueprint for higher

education is a great starting point,” said **Senator Carolyn Comitta**. “As we explore opportunities to improve the system, we should look to successful partnerships like the collaboration between West Chester University and Delaware County College that helps students earn their degrees in a cost-effective manner.”

“A strong higher education system is the key to Pennsylvania’s future. But what we’re doing right now isn’t working. PA ranks 49th in the state per capita for state government funding for higher education and in turn, the commonwealth ranks 48th in affordability. We have to do better, and we know we can do better for students in Pennsylvania and our neighboring states in search of the best colleges and universities,” said **Representative Chris Pielli**. “That is why I proudly support Governor Shapiro’s historic 2024-25 Proposed Budget for Higher Education and urge my colleagues in the Senate leadership to join us and help get this across the finish line so that Pennsylvania can compete with our neighbor states and ensure brighter, more prosperous futures for our children.”

“I’d like to express my heartfelt appreciation to Governor Shapiro for making accessible education a priority in our Commonwealth. Traditionally, education has been overlooked, leading to inadequately funded systems that fail to meet community needs,” said **Chester County Commissioner Marian Moskowitz**. “The demand for skilled professionals and the expansion of career opportunities for those seeking additional qualifications is evident. Pennsylvania’s commitment to higher education is not just long-awaited but vital for eliminating barriers to access. Supporting education means investing in a future rich with opportunities, capable of transforming lives and setting the stage for future generations. I am inspired by Governor Shapiro’s innovative approach to discussing the future of higher education. I am confident that together, we can profoundly impact the lives of Pennsylvania’s students, who deserve nothing less.”

Governor Shapiro and his Administration are currently working with higher education institutions and leaders, local and legislative leaders, labor leaders, and stakeholders across the Commonwealth to build out the details of the Governor’s blueprint for higher education and are actively meeting to gather feedback and input to finalize the plan.

“West Chester University is grateful to Governor Shapiro for his commitment to education within the Commonwealth. At West Chester, we’ve worked hard to identify students who have the most need, so we can provide the academic and financial support that will help them cross the finish line,” said **WCU President Chris Fiorentino**. “We also have a very proud history of partnering with many community colleges in our area and helping students transfer seamlessly so they can earn bachelor’s degrees. We’re proud of the work that we are doing and thank Governor Shapiro for shining a light on the need to make higher education accessible, affordable and high-quality.”

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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