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**February 28, 2024**

**Testimony  
Presented to the House Appropriations Committee  
FY 2024-25 Community Colleges Budget Request**

**Dr. Stanley M. Sidor  
Interim President & CEO, Pennsylvania Commission for Community Colleges**

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We appreciate the opportunity to provide written testimony to the House Appropriations Committee about the financial support for community college systems in 2024 and 2025. That you and your fellow Appropriations Committee members understand the vital role that community colleges play in the Commonwealth's workforce and education system is much appreciated.

Pennsylvania's community colleges are committed to furthering the Commonwealth's economic and educational goals. With this in mind, we humbly provide our testimony together with our budget proposal for the fiscal year 2024-25. With an eye toward providing Pennsylvanians with a measurable return on their investment, the plan details planned increases in state funding for college operations and capital projects.

In the face of ever-changing market needs and global developments, Pennsylvania's community colleges have played a crucial role in building a strong workforce, increasing the number of degrees and credentials earned, and keeping the cost of higher education manageable. When it comes to workforce training and postsecondary education, our institutions are unrivaled. Seventy-five percent of our programs are geared toward high-priority jobs and make substantial contributions to fields like healthcare and public safety. The impact of our colleges extends beyond education, directly fueling the Commonwealth's economy and societal development.

The fifteen community colleges in Pennsylvania are the largest provider of undergraduate public postsecondary education in the state in FY 2023, with nearly 245,000 students enrolled across all 67 counties. Opportunities for students to further their careers, further their education, and

earn noncredit degrees at these schools improve the Commonwealth's economic standing and global competitiveness while also improving students' personal lives.

Community college students come from many walks of life; forty-two percent of enrolled students are minorities or members of other marginalized groups. Community colleges in Pennsylvania serve a disproportionate number of low-income and first-generation college students compared to other types of institutions of higher learning. Nearly half of the Commonwealth's community college students come from low-income or very low-income households.

Seventy percent of credit students say they must go to class part-time because they must take care of someone else or work while in school. Additionally, all our students must have access to federal and state financial aid. Over half of all credit students get some type of financial aid. More than half of first-time, full-time students get a Pell Grant.

Pennsylvania's community colleges offer numerous credit and noncredit career development programs. Over 60% of community college students took advantage of the 1,400 credit programs these schools provided last academic year. Nursing, allied health, computer technology, web development, and early childhood education are among the High Priority Occupations (HPOs) identified by the Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry; almost three-quarters of these programs are in STEM-H fields. In FY 2023, more than 19,000 students transferred to another school to continue their studies. About 80% of those students transferred to another Pennsylvania institution, where they outperformed or were on par with the four-year students regarding degree completion rates.

Building a competent workforce and providing employee training are two other priorities for Pennsylvania's community colleges. Community college collaborations with over 2,100 businesses in Pennsylvania taught about 87,000 workers in 2023 -24. Community colleges train students for many in-demand careers, including those in law enforcement, emergency medical services, machinists, mechanics, nursing assistants, and truck drivers.

Staying in the Commonwealth is a popular choice for many graduates of Pennsylvania's community institutions. Alumni of Pennsylvania's community colleges have far-reaching effects in their respective fields, back home, and throughout the state. Contributing billions to the Commonwealth's economy, community colleges and their students also save taxpayers millions of dollars a year by lowering demand for publicly supported services. There is strong evidence from studies of regional and municipal economies that public monies invested in community colleges provide substantial returns for the people who pay them.

In addition, I would like to bring to your attention an urgent fiscal matter. During the 2023-24 fiscal-year budget impasse, there was a significant delay in state funding for Community Colleges. The unforeseen delay put considerable financial strain on our institutions, necessitating a request for an additional allocation of \$2M. The impact of the delay has been substantial – colleges have been compelled to secure loans with burdensome interest rates and to utilize reserve funds to cover operational costs, maintain debt service, support student services, compensate our staff, and ensure continuity of education. The additional \$2M is critical to mitigate those financial challenges and to support the ongoing mission of our Community Colleges.

As we navigate this transformative era, our commitment to advancing the Commonwealth’s education and economic agenda remains steadfast. In this light, we respectfully submit our budget request for fiscal year 2024-25, included with our testimony. The proposal outlines strategic increases in state appropriations for the operations and capital projects of our colleges, emphasizing a tangible return on investment for Pennsylvania’s taxpayers.



#### **Increase the community college operating appropriation.**

**The cornerstone of our request for FY 2024-25 is a \$21.2M increase in the Community College Operating Appropriation, making an 8.1% enhancement to sustain and elevate our mission. This increment is crucial to address the historical surge in operational costs and to bridge the funding gaps resulting from diminishing state and local support. Our plan strategically allocates this increased investment to bolster degree and certificate attainment, concentrating on high-priority occupations that are instrumental to PA’s economic resurgence.**

With this funding, Pennsylvania’s community colleges will be able to meet the needs of local and statewide industries for affordable, high-quality postsecondary education and workforce training, especially in technical fields that demand intensive, hands-on training using industry-standard materials and equipment. These programs are costly and difficult to develop and maintain without public investment. If the Commonwealth wants to increase its postsecondary education attainment rate and create a highly skilled workforce to support business and industry, it must invest in the most effective providers of that education and training – its community colleges.



#### **Increase the community college capital appropriation.**

**We are requesting a 15% increase, amounting to \$8M, for the transfer to the Community College Capital Fund. This boost is imperative to ensure that our infrastructure and**

**instructional capabilities keep pace with contemporary demands, thus safeguarding the quality and accessibility of our educational offerings.**

Community colleges cannot fulfill the Commonwealth's demands for education and training without enough funding for capital upgrades. By completing these projects, the institutions can upgrade their facilities and better serve the Commonwealth's educational and employment requirements, while also boosting local economies.



### **Budget Deadlock Related Expenses**

**On behalf of the Community College sector, the Pennsylvania Commission for Community Colleges seeks an additional \$2M beyond our initial proposal of \$282,832,840 (an 8.1 percent increase) for fiscal year 2024-25. This adjustment aims to address the financial impact of the deadlock, bringing the total requested support to \$284,832,840 for fiscal year 2024-25.**

The General Assembly was unable to agree on a code bill that would have adequately funded Pennsylvania's community colleges before the start of fiscal year 2023–24 on July 1, 2023. House Bill 301, also known as Act 33 of 2023, was passed on December 13, 2023, breaking the impasse. It allocated \$261,640,000 to the community college sector, a 2% increase (\$5,160,000) over the previous fiscal year. Over the course of six months, the colleges incurred additional expenses of \$2,000,000 due to the budget impasse, which required them to either borrow money or reallocate existing resources. Thus, for fiscal year 2023-24, the net increase in funding from the Commonwealth was effectively reduced from \$261,640,000 to \$259,640,000.

For many Pennsylvanians, our community colleges serve as more than just places of higher learning; they are sources of opportunity, hope, and financial security. The improvements we suggest are not just figures; they are a vision of a more educated, skilled, and prosperous Pennsylvania. We can keep bringing about good change and building a future in which every Pennsylvanian can prosper and make a significant contribution to our wonderful Commonwealth with your help.

We look forward to a collaborative journey ahead, driving Pennsylvania towards new heights of educational excellence and economic vitality.

Thank you.

Dr. Stanley M. Sidor



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February 20, 2024

Honorable Jordan Harris  
Majority Chairman  
House Appropriations Committee  
512E Main Capitol Building  
Harrisburg, PA 17102

Honorable Seth Grove  
Minority Chairman  
House Appropriations Committee  
245 Main Capitol Building  
Harrisburg, PA 17102

Chairman Harris and Chairman Grove:

Pennsylvania's community colleges look forward to working with you in the coming months to strengthen our workforce, improve degree and credential attainment along with affordability.

The purpose of this letter is to forward our budget request for the fiscal year 2024-2025 detailing requested increases to the state appropriations for the operations of the college and capital projects, and the return taxpayers can expect for their increased investment.

Community colleges are a foundational piece of our economy serving as the largest provider of postsecondary education and workforce training, with 75% of college programs aligned with high priority occupations. The colleges credential more healthcare workers than both PASSHE and the state-related schools, in addition to being the largest single contributor to the PA public safety workforce, while providing a high-quality, flexible, accessible, and affordable pipeline for students to transfer and obtain a baccalaureate degree with average savings of approximately \$30,000 on a baccalaureate degree.

As we wait for the final report of the governor's higher education working group and his second budget proposal, please know that my staff and I are available to answer any questions on how to maximize the impact of community colleges to benefit Pennsylvania students and their families and grow our economy.

The budget request is submitted as follows:

 Community College Operating Appropriation	Pages: 1-3
 Breakdown of Proposed Investment by College	Pages: 4-6
 Transfer to the Community College Capital Fund	Pages: 7-8
 Index and Supporting Information	Pages: 9-10
 Budget Deadlock Related Expenses	Page: 11

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stan Sidor".

Dr. Stan Sidor  
Interim President/CEO



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## Community College Operating Appropriations (Page 1)

### Background

Pennsylvania’s community colleges are the single largest provider of postsecondary education and workforce training in the Commonwealth serving more than 236,000 students. The role and impact of state-sponsored community colleges on the lives of Pennsylvanians and the strength of our economy cannot be overstated.

Collectively, Pennsylvania’s 15 community colleges provide Pennsylvanians with high-quality and affordable education that either leads directly to employment in a high priority occupation or allows the student to transfer and save an estimated \$30,000 relative to a student who enrolls directly into a baccalaureate-granting institution.<sup>1</sup>

Economically, the colleges are essential for training the state’s workforce as more than 2,100 employers’ partner with community colleges to provide training for 87,000 Pennsylvanians in industries ranging from commercial transportation, public safety, natural resource development and healthcare.

Pennsylvania, after more than a decade of recession-level funding for its community colleges, stands at an inflection point. Community colleges serve more students in aggregate including first-generation learners, minority, and low-income students than any other sector in higher education connecting students with in-demand jobs.

From 2015-2016 through 2022-2023, community colleges have received the second lowest amount of state support and new investment on a percent increase basis – only marginally more than the state-related schools over that same period. The lack of state investment threatens the affordability and accessibility that allows community colleges through their high-quality programing to connect students with employment in high priority occupations that our economy relies on.

### Request

To ensure community colleges remain affordable, accessible and connect students with employment in high priority occupations, the Pennsylvania Commission for Community Colleges request the Community College Operation Appropriation be increased by \$21.2 million. This line-item is the mechanism by which the state sponsors its 15 community colleges and constitutes an 8.1% increase.

The recommended increase would adjust the operating appropriation to reflect historical increases in the costs that colleges pay for salaries, services, goods, and utilities, as estimated by the Higher Education Price Index (HEPI) and will help close operational funding deficits at the colleges attributable to decreasing state and local support. Increased investment by the state will be used to implement, support, or expand strategies to increase degree and certificate attainment, with a focus on programs that lead to careers in high priority occupations. Please find below a summary of appropriation history for the Community Colleges Line Item:

<u>Fiscal Year</u>	<u>Operating Appropriation</u>	<u>Percent Increase</u>	<u>HEPI Increases</u>
2020-21	\$243,855,000	0%	2.7%
2021-22	\$245,240,000	0.6%	5.2%
2022-23	\$256,510,000	4.6%	4.5%
2023-24	\$261,640,000	2.0%	
2024-25	\$282,832,840	8.1%	

<sup>1</sup> Weighted average of differences in net price paid by students: PA associate-attaining transfer students compared to traditional four-year students (IPEDS)

We also want to draw your attention to a pressing financial issue. During the 2023-24 fiscal-year budget impasse, there was a significant delay in state funding for Community Colleges. The unforeseen delay put considerable financial strain on our institutions, necessitating a request for an additional allocation of \$2M. The impact of the delay has been substantial – colleges have been compelled to secure loans with burdensome interest rates and to utilize reserve funds to cover operational costs, maintain debt service, support student services, compensate our staff, and ensure continuity of education. The additional \$2M is critical to mitigate those financial challenges and to support the ongoing mission of our Community Colleges.

## **Return on Taxpayer Investment** *(Page 2)*

Community colleges estimate that increased investment by the Commonwealth will yield significant benefit to Pennsylvania's economy along with the communities served by colleges including:

### **Strengthening the Commonwealth's Workforce**

#### *Increase Degree and Credential Attainment Levels:*

New funds provided by the Commonwealth will be invested in student support services that are proven to increase student retention and completion rates. An example of this comes from the impact that proactive coaching combined with assistance in schedule selection, tutoring and paired with financial assistance, as needed by the student, has on retention and completion. Studies indicate these efforts can increase retention and graduation rates within 6 months by 5%. In addition, the adoption of case management system to increase access to a specific advisor, studies have shown to increase the likelihood by 7% that a student will graduate with an associate degree.

The colleges conservatively estimate investing in student support services will result in increased attainment and completion rates by 3%. This results in **4,000 more** degrees and credentials awarded by community colleges primarily in high priority occupations with an anticipated annual economic impact of \$21.7 million.<sup>2</sup>

#### *Expand Enrollment in Programs that Lead to Careers in High Priority Occupations:*

Increased investment by the Commonwealth into its community colleges will be used by the colleges to increase enrollment and access to programs through scholarships that result in employment in high priority occupations. This includes the number of students in nursing and other allied healthcare professions, law enforcement training programs, and information technology including cybersecurity among others.

Community colleges educate and award more nursing degrees than any other sector in public higher education at a time when Pennsylvania is facing one of the worst nursing shortages in the country over the next decade. Additionally, in calendar year 2022, community colleges trained more part-time and full-time police cadets than any other provider of law enforcement training in the state, which addresses the shortage of more than 1,200 municipal law enforcement officers referenced by Governor Shapiro in his 2023 budget address.

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<sup>2</sup> Product of additional community college credential-earners and difference between estimated entry-level PA HPO annual earnings and median earnings of PA HS-only workers (BLS, Census)

## **Increased College Affordability for Pennsylvanians** *(Page 3)*

### *Expand Dual Enrollment Opportunities:*

Dual enrollment programs are a loss leader for community colleges as some community colleges offer discounts that range between 48% and 78% of normal tuition charges; the colleges estimate increased investment by the Commonwealth will result in the expansion of dual enrollment for more than 1,000 high school students.

This will allow for more Pennsylvanians to receive college credit and decrease the overall cost and time required to complete a degree or credential making higher education more affordable. Additionally, studies have shown that students who take dual enrollment are more likely to apply for higher education by 7% and are more likely to complete their degree by at least 12%.<sup>3</sup> By increasing attainment levels and reducing the cost of the degree or credential, the increased investment by the commonwealth will improve the affordability of higher education for Pennsylvania students and their families.

### *Increase Scholarship Opportunities:*

Community college students do not consume their education in a traditional manner as the colleges serve more low-income, adult learners, first-generation students along with students who are financially responsible for the well-being of their family.

This is reflected in the fact 80% of students receive some form of financial assistance with approximately 46% of community college students receiving a Pell Grant. Half of all community college Pell recipients receive the maximum annual grant - indicating family incomes that are between 175%-225% of the federal poverty limit.

Due to the financial constraints many students are forced to drop or “stop out” which reduces their eligibility for future aid. Increased investment by the Commonwealth will be used to reduce the burden to attend or resume degree granting or credential programs that improve an individual’s earning potential.

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<sup>3</sup> [ERIC - ED629763 - Assessing College-Credit-In-High-School Programs as On-Ramps to Postsecondary Career Pathways for Underrepresented Students. Research Brief, Community College Research Center, Teachers College, Columbia University, 2023-Apr](#)

## Breakdown of Proposed New Investment by Community College *(Page 4)*

### Overview

The table shows estimated projected funding using the latest statutorily enacted formula for community colleges that disburse state funding using full-time enrolled student numbers (FTE) in the 2021-2022 academic year. The number used for current state funding is based on what the colleges will receive assuming enactment of our funding formula for FY23-24. Allocations will be adjusted after FY 2022-2023 FTEs are finalized.

### College's FY 24-25 Estimated Operating Allocation - Assuming 8% Funding Increase

Estimated using FY 21-22 FTE's, per current CC funding formula

College	Current State Funding	Proposed Increase	Percent Increase
Community College of Allegheny County	\$38,263,122	\$2,686,587	7.02%
Beaver County Community College	\$5,206,986	\$372,837	7.16%
Bucks County Community College	\$21,596,692	\$1,903,686	8.81%
Butler County Community College	\$9,048,718	\$682,872	7.55%
Delaware County Community College	\$20,721,421	\$1,754,495	8.47%
Erie County Community	\$2,911,140	\$46,036	1.58%
Harrisburg Area Community College	\$36,332,606	\$2,959,679	8.15%
Lehigh Carbon Community College	\$14,917,971	\$1,458,953	9.78%
Luzerne County Community College	\$13,165,076	\$958,521	7.28%
Montgomery County Community College	\$21,356,783	\$1,957,964	9.17%
Northampton Community College	\$18,146,978	\$1,696,807	9.35%
Pennsylvania Highlands Community College	\$3,163,774	\$350,956	11.09%
Community College of Philadelphia	\$34,133,091	\$2,504,147	7.34%
Reading Area Community College	\$9,511,835	\$953,122	10.02%
Westmoreland County Community College	\$13,164,007	\$913,337	6.94%

## Impact of Increased Investments *(Page 5)*

Should the General Assembly adopt, and the governor enact our budget request, the colleges will use the investment by the state to expand enrollment through targeted scholarships in programs that result in careers in high priority occupations such as nursing or other allied healthcare professions.

Additionally, as mentioned earlier in our request, to ensure more of the students who walk through a community college door leave with a degree or a credential particularly in high priority occupations, the colleges will use funds to expand student support services that increase retention and completion rates. Below is a list of investments which community colleges have pledged to fulfill should our budget request be enacted:

### Increase Degree and Credential Attainment Levels:

All fifteen colleges in the sector will expand direct student support activities such as proactive advising, tutoring and additional student support to increase retention and completion.

<i>Community College of Allegheny County</i>	<i>Community College of Beaver County</i>	<i>Bucks County Community College</i>	<i>Butler County Community College</i>
<i>Delaware County Community College</i>	<i>Erie County Community College</i>	<i>HACC, Central Pennsylvania's Community College</i>	<i>Lehigh Carbon Community College</i>
<i>Luzerne County Community College</i>	<i>Montgomery County Community College</i>	<i>Northampton Community College</i>	<i>Pennsylvania Highlands Community College</i>
<i>Community College of Philadelphia</i>	<i>Reading Area Community College</i>	<i>Westmoreland County Community College</i>	

### Expand Dual Enrollment Opportunities:

-  Community College of Allegheny County - Utilize additional Dual Enrollment funding to support more than 100 new students for emerging high demand careers.
-  Montgomery County Community College – Implement high demand educational programming to increase student enrollment in health and teaching careers.
-  Lehigh Carbon Community College – Expand dual enrollment and Early College partnerships for 900 students in 13 school districts and 2 career and technical institutes.
-  Northampton Community College: Expanding dual enrollment offerings available to students in the college's service area to increase the affordability of higher education to more students and their families.
-  Westmoreland County Community College – Expand the number of students who can utilize and take advantage of the college's career pathways program and College-in-the-High-School program.

### **Expand Enrollment in Programs that Lead to Careers in High Priority Occupations** *(Page 6)*

- 🌟 Pennsylvania Highlands Community College – Expand law enforcement program to increase the number of graduates from the policy academy.
- 🌟 Luzerne County Community College – Implement an Advanced Manufacturing program to train 75 students for the companies in the Northeast Pennsylvania Manufacturing (NEPA) region.
- 🌟 Reading Area Community College – Update Allied health program simulation labs to increase enrollment by 56 students and add an evening program.
- 🌟 Delaware County Community College – Renovate existing facility to create labs and classrooms for early childhood education program.
- 🌟 HACC – Funds will be utilized to enhance existing programs and increase the number of students who enroll in credit and noncredit programs that result in high priority careers including, but not limited to, nursing, law enforcement, firefighter, EMS, dental hygienist, automotive technician among others.

### **Increase Scholarship Opportunities:**

- 🌟 Bucks County Community College – Remove non-academic barriers by establishing gap scholarships to cover the remaining cost of attendance for students with financial aid to increase retention by 3%.
- 🌟 Community College of Beaver County – Begin second chance Pell grant at Beaver County Prison to reduce recidivism.
- 🌟 Community College of Philadelphia – Expand workforce development non-credit tuition funding to enroll an additional 250 students in fire training, EMS/EMT, Technology, Electrician, and Welding among others.
- 🌟 Butler County Community College – Provide scholarships for students entering programs that lead to employment in critical industries including law enforcement, nursing, and other healthcare professions.
- 🌟 Erie County Community College – Expand available scholarships in order to remove cost barriers that prevent students from low-income groups from accessing higher education.



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## Transfer to Community College Capital Fund *(Page 7)*

### Background

Pennsylvania's community colleges receive financial support for instructional and infrastructure improvements through the Transfer to the Community College Capital Fund Appropriation. These Commonwealth funds provide for one-half of the cost of approved capital projects. No new money was appropriated to the Capital Fund in FY 2023-24. Absent additional funding, colleges only receive state funding through debt retiring from previously funded projects, which is generally only sufficient for fewer than half of the colleges to receive project funding in any given year.

For the period from 2010-2011 through 2023-2024, the Capital Fund only grew by \$7.8 million, or a little over \$450,000/year, the lowest growth of any higher education line item. This has made it increasingly difficult for the colleges to keep up with building and labor costs. Additionally, the colleges estimate their total cost for critical deferred maintenance projects across the sector to be at least \$300 million. Many colleges wait several years for deferred maintenance projects to be approved – compromising the long-term health of their buildings and reducing the quality of service provided to students.

### Status

The Transfer to Community College Capital Fund Appropriation supports new instructional and infrastructure improvement projects including leases, capital projects and necessary technology upgrades as well as deferred maintenance at Pennsylvania's community colleges.

Community college infrastructure across the Commonwealth is aging, and increased funding is not only necessary to maintain the Commonwealth's current investment in community college infrastructure on the most basic level, but also to provide the facilities and equipment necessary to ensure students are offered high-quality instruction in high priority occupations at an affordable rate in the years to come.

### Request

For FY 2024-2025, the Pennsylvania Commission for Community Colleges requests that the Transfer to the Community College Capital Fund be increased by 15% or \$8 million to a total of \$62.285 million to provide funds to support one priority project at each Pennsylvania community college. Lack of funding impacts vital capital projects related to programs in healthcare and public safety. Additionally, this will help colleges make meaningful progress on critical deferred maintenance projects, such as roof replacements, building settlement issues and water infiltration remediation, which threaten program viability in addition to jeopardizing health and safety of students and faculty.

### Benefits

Capital improvements and the funds that support them are critical if the colleges are to continue to meet the Commonwealth's education and workforce training needs. Projects completed with these funds will directly contribute to local economic activity, are expected to increase retention and enrollment, and will extend the safe and useful life of campus facilities.

## Identification of Potential Capital Projects *(Page 8)*

All colleges have planned capital projects that, given increased state funding, could be started immediately and that would positively impact the attainment and retention goals of the entire sector. To provide additional context, an example capital project from each college has been included below:

- ✦ Community College of Allegheny County – Various planned repairs to the college’s Milton Hall building to prevent leaks that threaten the future life of the building and are creating a mold hazard for students and faculty.
- ✦ Community College of Beaver County – Expansion and renovation of their Aviation Sciences Center to enable additional instructional capacity; enrollment increase projected at 200 additional students over 5 years.
- ✦ Bucks County Community College – Installation of new security camera systems throughout satellite campuses to promote student and faculty health and safety\*.
- ✦ Butler County Community College – Modernization of IT infrastructure to improve student experience and reduce cybersecurity risks.
- ✦ Delaware County Community College – Construction of a new campus that would promote additional capacity in allied health, culinary and workforce development programs.
- ✦ HACC - Repair of defective fire and smoke alarms throughout main campus and satellite locations.
- ✦ Lehigh Carbon Community College – Public safety project to expand security system by adding both exterior and interior access controls and integrating ID badges with surveillance systems.
- ✦ Luzerne County Community College – Full water line replacement at their Nanticoke campus.
- ✦ Northampton Community College – Creation of holistic wellness resource centers at Bethlehem and Monroe campuses, intended to aid students struggling with food insecurity, housing, transportation, and mental health/wellness\*.
- ✦ Montgomery County Community College – Various IT enhancements throughout campuses to improve student experience and campus physical/cyber security, includes cloud conversion for some systems/processes and addition of security camera systems\*.
- ✦ Pennsylvania Highlands Community College – Campus expansion project to add additional instructional capacity into Centre County\*.
- ✦ Community College of Philadelphia – Construction of a new Health and Life Sciences building that would promote additional capacity in healthcare programs, including Medical Laboratory Technology, Respiratory Care Technology, and Dental Hygiene, in addition to supporting the flagship nursing program.
- ✦ Reading Area Community College – Campus wayfinding projects to improve student and faculty on-campus mobility and parking.
- ✦ Westmoreland County Community College - Improvements in the chemistry labs within their Science Innovation Center to increase quality of STEM instruction.

\* Denotes a project for which the college has conducted preliminary planning but has not yet submitted to PDE.

## Index and Supporting Information *(Page 9)*

### Background

The following expands on the information above to highlight the proven track record of enhanced student support services and dual enrollment for increasing retention and completion rates for students taking postsecondary courses. Studies cited can be provided at request.

### Value of Student Support Services

Community college students do not consume their education in a traditional manner as the colleges serve more low-income, adult learners, first-Pennsylvania's community colleges enrollment has begun to recover from the disruption caused by the Covid pandemic and have been increasing their efforts to retain students in response to the new reality where current and future projections have fewer students in the K-12 pipeline.<sup>1</sup>

Increasing student retention and graduation rates in Pennsylvania's community colleges, like all other community colleges in the nation, has become the most important initiative to meet the demand of business and industry for highly skilled workers.

Implementing new strategies and increasing the impact of historically proven ones focused upon, means to increase enrollment retention and subsequent graduation with the goal of increasing the incomes of our students and the economic viability of the Commonwealth.

Some of the main reasons why community college students struggle to finish their degrees include not having enough money, rapidly changing job and life circumstances and not knowing where to turn for help to enhance their academic performance and an increasing need for more proactive and personal support.

Community college student advisor caseloads often exceed 1000 students per advisor resulting in an average student meeting with an advisor only one or two times per year.

Additionally marginalized, low-income students, and first-generation students who have significant support needs are less likely to reach out to advisors than their peers<sup>2</sup>. Research shows that creating sustained, strategic, integrated, proactive, and personalized advising practices are one of the most effective means of attracting, guiding and graduating community college students.

The utilization of a case management approach to reduce the number of students assigned to a specific advisor can increase the likelihood of earning an associate degree by as much as 7%<sup>3</sup>.

Proactive approaches to coaching community college students on course and schedule selection, tutoring, coupled with financial assistance leads to higher retention and completion rates. Coached students' retention rates are 5.2 percentage points after six months than non-coached students. (63.2 percent vs. 58.0 percent). And their graduation rates are 5 percent higher than non-coached students<sup>4</sup>.

Using a case management advising and coaching approach, students receive ongoing assistance during their time in college. Strategic service delivery is differentiated depending on the degree of need, and integrated academic and nonacademic support.

Colleges are also using technology more and more to leverage support career and course planning, notify staff when students need extra help, find students who might need it, and schedule advising meetings. These new technologies coupled with additional hands-on time adds significant expense to strapped college budgets.

Every college in the sector is requesting additional funds to implement, enhance or expand proactive advising, tutoring, and student support to increase student success and retention.

## **Value of Dual Enrollment** *(Page 10)*

Nationally, more than one million students enroll in dual enrollment courses through partnerships their school districts establish with higher education institutions. Community college dual enrollment programs account for approximately 70% of all dual enrollment across the nation.<sup>4</sup>

Although dual enrollment is primarily offered to students in an “a la carte manner,” community colleges have also invested in establishing “Early College High Schools” (ECHS) that incorporate college courses into the high school curriculum.<sup>5</sup>

“Early College High Schools” enable students to graduate high school while simultaneously obtaining an associate degree, which saves students and families thousands of dollars for the cost of higher education. Compared to the more traditional form of dual enrollment, ECHS or similar programs are more intensive; however, research has shown they increase the likelihood that a student pursues higher education by 7% and completes a degree or credential by 12%.<sup>6</sup>

A study conducted by the University of Texas in 2018, found that students who enrolled in dual enrollment courses were three times as likely to complete their degree in four years and on average completed their degree a semester early.<sup>7</sup>

The U.S. Department of Education also made a similar finding, asserting that dual enrollment programs reduce the length of time and, by extension, the cost for a student to obtain a postsecondary degree or credential.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> [How Can Community Colleges Afford to Offer Dual Enrollment College Courses to High School Students at a Discount? \(ed.gov\)](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Dually Noted: Understanding the Link Between Dual Enrollment Course Characteristics and Students' Course and College Enrollment Outcomes](#)

<sup>6</sup> [ERIC - ED629763 - Assessing College-Credit-In-High-School Programs as On-Ramps to Postsecondary Career Pathways for Underrepresented Students. Research Brief, Community College Research Center, Teachers College, Columbia University, 2023-Apr](#)

<sup>7</sup> [utsystem-dualcreditstudy.pdf](#)

<sup>8</sup> [Dual Enrollment \(Knowles\) 1230pm \(PDF\) \(ed.gov\)](#)



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### **Budget Deadlock Related Expenses** *(Page 11)*

Before fiscal year 2023-24 commenced on July 1, 2023, the General Assembly could not reach a consensus on a necessary code bill for funding Pennsylvania's Community Colleges. The deadlock was broken on December 13, 2023, with the approval of House Bill 301, enacted as Act 33 of 2023, which provided \$261,640,000 to the community college sector, marking a 2 percent increase (\$5,160,000) from the prior fiscal year.

The budget deadlock forced the colleges to either take out loans or reallocate funds, collectively incurring \$2,000,000 in extra costs over a six-month period. As a result, the net increase in support from the Commonwealth was effectively diminished to \$259,640,000 for fiscal year 2023-24.

Given these extra costs, the Pennsylvania Commission for Community Colleges seeks an additional \$2,000,000 beyond our initial proposal of \$282,832,840 (an 8.1 percent increase) for fiscal year 2024-25. This adjustment aims to address the financial impact of the deadlock, bringing the total requested support to \$284,832,840 for fiscal year 2024-25.