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### **PA Community College Supporters Gather at Capitol**

**HARRISBURG** – Hundreds of students, trustees, faculty and staff from Pennsylvania’s 14 community colleges joined together at the Capitol today to advocate for a state budget that includes sufficient state operating and capital funding for the community colleges – collectively, the largest provider of public higher education and workforce training in the Commonwealth.

The colleges – which served nearly 327,000 students from all 67 counties in the state last year, are currently funded below 2008-09 levels, even before accounting for inflation.

“Community colleges, with a mission to provide accessible, quality, affordable higher education and training throughout Pennsylvania, are key to the Commonwealth’s future success,” said Tom Leary, President of Luzerne County Community College and Board Chair for the Commission. “Providing increased funds for community colleges in this year’s state budget would recognize both our importance to the Commonwealth’s education sector and the workforce, as well as the colleges’ ongoing efforts to evaluate and respond to local community and workforce needs.”

In 2015-16, they provided a foundation for more than 34,000 students who sought transfer to four-year institutions, 81% of those who remained in the state. Through WEDNetPA, our colleges provided more than \$10 million in customized training for employers, and trained more than 18,000 workers. In the same school year, the colleges conferred more than 17,000 awards statewide – an 18% increase over the awards conferred in 2008-09.

“Community colleges offer the most affordable and accessible path to higher education for students. Community colleges serve the largest number of students seeking higher education in our state that works to create job ready Pennsylvanians.” said Rep. James R. Roebuck, who serves as the Democratic Chairman of the House Education Committee, the Democratic Chair of the House Community College Caucus and also serves on the Board of Trustees at the Community College of Philadelphia. “The education and job training provided by community colleges is vital to the Commonwealth’s economic development.”

Representative Jim Marshall serves as the Republican Chair of the House Community College Caucus, and also voiced his support for the colleges. “Community colleges are cost-effective for both students and communities, and can nimbly respond to workforce and employer needs, as shown by the transformation underway in my own district as the region prepares for the coming Shell petrochemical plant,” said Marshall.

In addition to the rally, approximately 200 Pennsylvania community college students spent the day visiting with their local legislators to advocate on behalf of the community colleges’ FY 17-18 budget request.

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The **Pennsylvania Commission for Community Colleges** is a voluntary membership association for Pennsylvania’s community colleges. Its members include the college presidents, members of the colleges’ boards of trustees, and key college administrators. The Commission represents the interests of and advocates for the collective needs of the community colleges to federal and state policymakers. For more information, please visit [www.pacommunitycolleges.org](http://www.pacommunitycolleges.org).