



Expansion of Community Colleges in Pennsylvania

Pennsylvania's 14 publicly-established community colleges under Article XIX-A of the Public School Code are collectively the largest provider of public postsecondary education in the Commonwealth. For over 50 years in a variety of educational settings and across various delivery systems, the colleges have demonstrated agility and flexibility in designing and offering academic and workforce programming to meet the needs of the students, employers and communities they serve.

As a result of their positive impact and effect, there has been increased attention to the expansion of the community college concept across the Commonwealth and calls to duplicate the success of Pennsylvania's existing community colleges.

Pennsylvania's community colleges are uniquely positioned and eager to help expand community college programming across the Commonwealth. As the Commonwealth works towards achieving its attainment goals, the Commission recommends the following:

- I. The Community College Act of 1963 and associated rules and regulations should provide the context for the establishment of new entities.
 - A meaningful commitment of local resources by a local sponsor is essential to ensure the ability of the new entity to function optimally.
 - Funding for the start-up costs, operating and capital needs of any new college should be in addition to funding for existing community colleges.

- II. In order to benefit from economies of scale, communities interested in community college services should be encouraged to explore partnerships with existing Pennsylvania Community Colleges.

- III. Financial resources should be made available for existing community colleges to partner with host communities on a pilot basis to bring community college programming into underserved areas of the state pursuant to the results of a feasibility study. The benefits of pilot partnerships include:
 - The host community can benefit from the expertise of the existing community college in community college management, including program design, student financial aid and student services,
 - The administrative resources of the existing community college can support the pilot entity,
 - The new entity can focus on programming relevant in the local area,
 - Data and information from the pilot partnership can be used in evaluation and assessment, and
 - The evaluation and assessment can inform decision making on program expansion and/or the establishment of a traditional independent community college under the provisions of the Community College Act.

To ensure that existing community colleges are able to maintain their operating standards and offer high quality programs, the financial resources for the pilot partnerships should be in addition to the existing operating and capital funding support provided to the colleges by the Commonwealth.

Note: Commission membership is open to any college organized under the Community College Act.