

PASSHE & COMMUNITY COLLEGES BUDGET HEARING WRAP

Wednesday, March 11, 2026



General Overview:

Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PASSHE) Chancellor Christopher Fiorentino and Slippery Rock University President Karen Riley, along with Pennsylvania Commission for Community Colleges President Tuesday Stanley, Butler County Community College President Megan Coval, and Community College of Philadelphia President Alycia Marshall, testified before the House Appropriations Committee today. House Republicans focused questions on how PASSHE schools and community colleges are working together and the ways both systems can meet our workforce needs while keeping tuition costs low.

Key Takeaways:

- The Governor is proposing to level-fund PASSHE with \$625.8 million in appropriations from the General Fund for Fiscal Year 2026-27. The PASSHE Board of Governors requested \$651.8 million, a 5% increase.
- The Governor's budget proposes to level-fund the Community Colleges line item with \$277.3 million in General Fund support for Fiscal Year 2026-27. The Commission requested an increase of \$16.6 million.
- Members of the committee were pleased to hear that both education systems are working to prepare students for high-demand job areas.
 - One example provided is a PASSHE school's partnership with a carpenter's union, which benefits college students and provides carpenter trainees with college credits.
- House Republicans learned that community colleges are working with high schools to expand dual enrollment programs. This helps students emerge from high school with college credits, reducing the number of classes they need to take and potentially decreasing students' costs for higher education.
- Members were informed by PASSHE that the consolidation of PennWest and Commonwealth Universities is not yet complete, but the process is moving forward. PASSHE leaders stated the system has already saved more in non-personnel costs from consolidations than projected in the PASSHE Board-approved plan.
- House Republicans were alarmed to learn that community colleges are seeing an increase in the need for remedial courses after high school graduation.
- Community college and PASSHE leaders shared various ways schools in both systems are working to engage with students who have already started a career and are looking to continue their education.

Notable Q&A:



Rep. Marci Mustello asks about the success of dual enrollment programs and education opportunities for high-demand jobs.



Rep. Jim Rigby asked how community colleges are working with first responders.



Rep. Jeff Olsommer asks if there has been an increase in the need for remedial courses.