

**Testimony before the Senate Appropriations Committee
Hearing for Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education**

Presented by: Guido M. Pichini, Chairman, PASSHE Board of Governors

Dr. Francine McNairy, President, Millersville University

Dr. Bill Ruud, President, Shippensburg University

November 3, 2011

Millersville University Student Memorial Center

Chairman Pichini's Comments

Good afternoon, Chairman Corman, Chairman Hughes and members of the Senate Appropriations Committee. Please allow me to take this opportunity on behalf of the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education to thank all of you for scheduling this hearing. I believe we have an important story to tell. I also would like to thank our friends at Millersville University for their hospitality today.

I am Guido Pichini and it is my sincere honor to serve as Chairman of the PASSHE Board of Governors. I am incredibly proud of the fact that I am a State System graduate — the first PASSHE alumnus to serve as Board Chairman. With me are Dr. Bill Ruud, president of Shippensburg University of Pennsylvania, and Dr. Francine McNairy, president of Millersville University of Pennsylvania. Also in attendance and from whom you will hear later today is Chancellor John Cavanaugh, as well as my fellow Board member, Marie Conley, who is our vice chair and chair of our Human Resources Committee — and a graduate of Bloomsburg University — and several key members of our staff.

My college story is similar to that of many of the students currently enrolled at the 14 PASSHE universities. My family wanted to provide me with the best possibilities they could and wanted me to go to college. I was fortunate that I was able to attend Kutztown University and earn my degree. But it wasn't without hard work and sacrifice. I was a commuter student and worked full-time in order to help with my tuition payments. I was able to do this because of the support of my family and my belief that a college education would make a profound difference in my life.

And it did.

After receiving my degree, I stayed in Pennsylvania. Today, I have my home in Pennsylvania and I am the president of a company that is based in Reading, Pennsylvania. All of this is because of the education I received at Kutztown University.

In my opinion, the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education was and continues to be the best investment in higher education for our Commonwealth's future.

The 14 PASSHE universities offer the lowest-cost, four-year education in the Commonwealth. Our annual tuition increases have been below the rate of inflation in four of the last seven years, ranking among the lowest in the nation among all public university systems during that time. Our universities provide an extremely high quality education that results in what I firmly believe is the best value available.

We also are very proud of the fact that 90 percent of PASSHE students are Pennsylvania residents, and that 83 percent of our students will remain in the Commonwealth after graduation.

The strength of PASSHE lies with the power of being a system. We are 14 universities strong, with nearly 120,000 students currently enrolled and nearly 500,000 alumni living in Pennsylvania alone.

Our universities work together, but also have their own unique qualities, which allow a student to find just the right fit within the System. We work closely with community colleges in Pennsylvania to match courses and programs to make it easier for students who start out at these two-year institutions to have a seamless transfer to a PASSHE university. The number of community college students transferring to PASSHE universities has been steadily increasing in recent years, and is now at a record high.

PASSHE universities also provide educational opportunities outside of the bricks and mortar of our college campuses by offering an ambitious distance learning curriculum. As an example, California University of Pennsylvania's Global Online program offers nearly three dozen degree and certificate programs completely over the Internet. Cal U enjoys an especially close working relationship with the U.S. military, providing courses and programs through GoArmyEd to personnel stationed around the world, including in Iraq and Afghanistan

We are doing these things to meet the needs of students, the needs of the regions our universities serve and the needs of our Commonwealth's ever-changing workforce.

Our universities are preparing students for today and for the future. We continually review our curriculum and programs to make certain we are providing what our students and their future employers need.

As Pennsylvania's public university system, we recognize we are stewards of the taxpayers' dollars. We take this responsibility seriously. As Chairman of the Board of Governors, it is an honor to serve with our university presidents who have made tough decisions, managed well and accomplished much with decreasing funding. The men and women graduating from our 14 universities are the best return on investment of Pennsylvania's tax dollars.

We are proud of our students, we proud of our faculty and staff, and we are proud that we are educating the future of Pennsylvania's workforce.

Now, allow me to introduce Dr. Francine McNairy. Again, before turning over the microphone, thank you Dr. McNairy and your team for hosting today's hearing.

Dr. McNairy's Comments

Thank you, Chairman Pichini, and thank you Senator Corman, Senator Hughes and committee members. Welcome to my university. It is a pleasure to be your host today. I hope you have the opportunity to look around, and I would invite you back anytime to visit.

I too am especially proud to be a member of the PASSHE team. My tenure actually goes back long before my arrival here at Millersville — all the way to 1973, when I was first hired as an assistant professor at Clarion State College, now Clarion University. I have been president of Millersville University since 2003.

I have seen this System grow into one of the top public university system in the nation. All of you also should be proud of this System and the role you have played in its development.

As public universities, we have a very important role to play in the Commonwealth, not just in educating students — which certainly is our top priority — but also in serving our communities and the entire state of Pennsylvania.

Allow me to talk about one of the ways in which we do that – and to brag a little about my university in the process. Many PASSHE universities operate specialized Centers or Institutes that work with community and civic organizations and businesses, providing assistance to municipal planners, local and state police, budding entrepreneurs and many others.

Let me cite just a few examples:

- The Pennsylvania Center for Digital Forensics at Bloomsburg University, which provides local and state police with access to the latest digital forensics hardware and software for use in active cases.
- The Gregory Barnes Center for Biotechnology Business Development at Clarion University, which houses local economic development support organizations, the university's Small Business Development Center, the Trinity Point Development Corporation and incubator space for newly formed biotechnology and nanotechnology companies, including NanoBlox.
- The Institute for Mine Mapping, Archival Procedures and Safety at IUP, which archives and digitally records mine maps and initiates new mine safety protocols based on its work.

Here at Millersville University, one of our showcases is the Civic and Community Engagement Research Project. This project comprises the Walker Center for Civic Responsibility and Leadership, the Entrepreneurial Leadership Center, The Center for Public Scholarship & Social Change and the Office of Experiential Learning and Career Management.

The Walker Center provides a variety of student-centered educational and developmental projects and activities. It is premised on the view that through civic education students will be awakened and equipped to become active leaders in civic affairs.

The Entrepreneurial Leadership Center is committed to encouraging innovation and creating entrepreneurial opportunities by linking Millersville with a network of community and business partners and promoting entrepreneurial activities by students and other members of the university community.

The Center for Public Scholarship & Social Change is committed to the production and dissemination of rigorous research that is community based or community focused in collaboration with key figures and organizations in our clients' communities.

The Office of Experiential Learning and Career Management administers and coordinates the university's academic internships and volunteer opportunities through community partnerships, assists in developing service learning courses, and supports the endeavors of the Centers.

Additional summaries of some of centers operated by the various PASSHE universities – including the Center for Land Use at Shippensburg University – are included in the packet of information that has been provided to you. There are many more; this is just a sampling.

If you talk with anyone from PASSHE for very long, you likely will hear the word collaboration — a lot. As a system of public universities, we have the unique opportunity to work together and to share resources — all for the betterment of our students, our communities, regions and the Commonwealth.

I would encourage you to visit any of our campuses, and, when you do, be sure to spend some time with our students and at the various Centers. Better yet, let the students show you around. They are the ones getting their hands dirty and doing much of the research, under the supervision of our outstanding faculty.

Now, please allow me to introduce my colleague, Dr. Bill Ruud, the current chair of the Council of Presidents.

Dr. Ruud's Comments

Thank you, Dr. McNairy. And to repeat, thank you Senator Corman, Senator Hughes and committee members for given all of us this opportunity to appear before you today.

The first part of my testimony might sound familiar. I, too, am a proud member of the PASSHE family, albeit much newer to the organization than the prior speakers. I have been president of Shippensburg University of Pennsylvania since 2007 — starting my sixth year in January.

During that time I have learned a lot, and have gained great respect for my presidential colleagues and their respective universities. By being a part of a System, we do have a unique opportunity to harness the power of our 14 universities to create a stronger overall organization. Each of our universities serves the Commonwealth by educating our citizens and preparing tomorrow's leaders, some of whom you also will hear from later today. I think you will be impressed.

We at PASSHE have achieved much success in recent years under extremely challenging circumstances. I know I can speak on behalf of my 13 colleagues in saying that we have had to make difficult decisions to control our costs, while continuing to make it our priority to ensure our students access to high quality, affordable education.

Not only are we the most affordable four-year higher education option in Pennsylvania, but many of our academic programs are also very highly ranked in the United States. The vast majority of those eligible are accredited by professional organizations nationally, an important stamp approve that greatly enhances our students' career prospects or their chances of gaining admission to graduate schools, including medical school and law school.

We are doing this through greater collaboration — there's that word again — and through developing new ways of teaching, always making certain that we remain flexible enough to adapt to changing workforce demands.

PASSHE universities are educating tens of thousands of students each year in vital fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). Nearly one in five students enrolled at a PASSHE university is a STEM major. We also are increasing enrollment every year in the allied health fields.

Additionally, five of our universities, working with employers in their regions, this fall introduced the first Professional Science Master's degree programs in the System. These programs combine rigorous study in science or mathematics with professional skills-based coursework in business, management, communications, public policy and other fields. Each of the five universities worked with employers in their region to identify high-tech workforce needs in order to develop these programs. These same employers will be able to mentor PSM students and also provide them with tuition assistance, offer them internships and then hire them when they graduate.

In addition to educating students pursuing four-year degrees, PASSHE universities also offer a variety of two-year programs that help promote career and workforce development. Over the last six years, PASSHE universities have awarded 650 associate degrees in nursing, helping to fill a critical need in Pennsylvania. PASSHE universities also are actively engaged with employers across the Commonwealth, providing a variety of job-training and other career development programs. In 2009-10, the universities combined for more than 80,000 course enrollments in workforce development programs.

We understand the enormity of preparing tomorrow's workforce and do all that we can to ensure we are meeting the needs of our students and the Commonwealth.

We have been effective stewards of the funds received from the Commonwealth so that we can dedicate these resources in the best manner possible. Over the last decade, we have eliminated more than \$220 million from our combined budgets through a variety of cost-control measures. In just the last year, we have netted more than \$30 million in savings through collaborative purchasing of goods and services. A series of energy-saving projects across the System have resulted in more than \$50 million in avoided costs over the last decade and participation in Guaranteed Energy Savings Act projects are projected to produce an additional nearly \$190 million in savings over the next 15 years.

As you can see, PASSHE is committed to the success of its students and to achieving its twin mission of providing high quality and affordable education.

Thank you and we would welcome your questions.