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**House of Representatives**  
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA  
HARRISBURG

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June 11, 2021

Chancellor Daniel Greenstein  
Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education  
Dixon University Center  
2986 North Second Street  
Harrisburg, PA 17110-1201

Board of Governors  
Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education  
Dixon University Center  
2986 North Second Street  
Harrisburg, PA 17110-1201

Dear Chancellor Greenstein and Board of Governors:

We write to request a one-year delay in consideration of the proposed Implementation Plan for integration of California University of Pennsylvania, Clarion University and Edinboro University in western Pennsylvania and Bloomsburg University, Mansfield University and Lock Haven University in northeastern Pennsylvania. The current proposal has a goal of enrolling the first cohort of students in August 2022. We believe that movement on such an implementation plan should be paused for at least one year.

Many important components of the proposed integrations are not clear, and many questions remained unanswered. Notably, the proposed implementation plans lack a detailed Financial Impact Report regarding the host communities, and they lack a before and after organization and structure chart, and related reports, relative to faculty and staff, even though Act 50 requires these items. Further, the integration plans contemplate a hybrid model of instruction with students taking online courses, yet it is unclear how many courses students would need to take online for a particular course of study at a particular host campus; there is no guarantee of access to computers, adequate wi-fi and dedicated on-campus space for connection to online courses, and similar equity issues; and there are no projected cost savings in terms of tuition, room and board and fees for students, despite a considerable degree of instruction being delivered online. Additionally, the plans do not provide details on what it means to be a branch campus, what the impact is on students and how athletic programs will be affected. Given these issues and unanswered questions, we believe that moving forward, at this time, will negatively impact student recruitment thereby further exacerbating the economic issues experienced by these institutions. In the event that these negative impacts were to cause one of the integrated institutions to close, this could cause a lack of access to higher education in a rural part of the Commonwealth, thereby resulting in a higher education desert. In order to avoid such a situation, we believe that more student input and feedback is needed on the proposed integration plan, by way of student surveys and the sharing of survey results, and dedicated public hearings at each affected institution, held on days and at times conducive to student participation.

We understand that a delay in implementation could also mean the need for additional financial resources for PASSHE. However, we observe that PASSHE is the recipient of considerable support through the American Rescue Plan (ARP) and that these funds could be used to meet that need. Insofar as additional support may be needed, we believe that the General Assembly should provide the necessary resources to fill that gap and we are advocates for the same. We have copied the various Appropriations Chairs on this letter so that they are aware of our advocacy of any necessary additional resources, as they negotiate the FY 2021-22 state budget and the allocation of ARP funding provided to the Commonwealth.

The mission of PASSHE “to increase educational attainment in the Commonwealth; to prepare students at the undergraduate and graduate levels for professional and personal success, and to contribute to the economic, social and cultural development of Pennsylvania’s communities, the Commonwealth and the nation” remains relevant and critical. PASSHE’s purpose to provide high-quality education at the lowest possible cost to students is as necessary today as it was when the system was founded in 1983. We want to continue to partner with PASSHE to help further that mission and purpose and we share the responsibility owed to the thousands of students enrolled in the system, the prospective future enrollees, and the nearly 800,000 living alumni, as well as to the administration, faculty, staff, and host communities for these institutions. We believe that a one-year delay in consideration of the implementation plans is necessary to further these objectives.

Sincerely,



Mark Longietti  
Democratic Chairman  
House Education Committee



Jordan Harris  
Democratic Whip

cc:

Honorable Tom Wolf, Governor  
Honorable Noe Ortega, Acting Secretary, PA Department of Education  
Senator Patrick Browne, Majority Chairman, Senate Appropriations Committee  
Senator Vincent Hughes, Minority Chairman, Senate Appropriations Committee  
Representative Stan Saylor, Majority Chairman, House Appropriations Committee  
Representative Matthew Bradford, Minority Chairman, House Appropriations Committee