California, Mansfield, Slippery Rock universities to offer new degree programs geared to meet workforce needs

29 new programs approved since January under accelerated review process

Harrisburg – Three universities across Pennsylvania’s State System of Higher Education—California, Mansfield and Slippery Rock—will offer a combined eight new degree programs beginning as early as this fall. All of the new programs are geared toward meeting specific workforce needs.

The latest round of programs brings to 29 the number of new degrees approved since January utilizing an accelerated degree-approval process. Each of the new programs was approved by State System Interim Chancellor Karen M. Whitney under the new process, which was designed to shorten the time it takes from when a new program is conceived until it can be approved and introduced into the classroom.

“Our universities are continuing to respond to the needs of both students and their future employers, developing new programs in high-demand fields that will help ensure both student success and a strong and healthy economy across Pennsylvania,” Dr. Whitney said. “With the accelerated degree-approval process, we are able to better respond to the interests of our students and needs of employers.”

The universities often work directly with employers in their regions to design new programs that address their needs, and also conduct market studies to identify potential student demand. At the same time, the universities regularly review their existing programs to ensure they remain relevant. Over the last five years, the 14 universities combined have introduced or reorganized more than 150 new degree, minor and certificate programs, and placed in moratorium or discontinued nearly 300 programs no longer in demand.

The new degree approval process is an important component of the ongoing effort to redesign the State System, with student success as its number one priority.

Five of the newly approved programs will be offered by Mansfield University of Pennsylvania. They are a Bachelor of Science degree in respiratory care; Associate of Science degrees in business administration, chemical technology and substance use and behavior disorder counseling; and an Associate of Applied Science degree in health education.

California University of Pennsylvania will offer new Bachelor of Science degrees in fisheries and wildlife biology and molecular biology while Slippery Rock University of Pennsylvania will offer a new Bachelor of Science degree in cybersecurity.
The Board of Governors in January granted the chancellor the authority to approve new academic programs once they are submitted by the universities and reviewed by staff in the Office of the Chancellor. Previously, new programs had to be approved by the Board, which meets regularly only four times a year.

The accelerated degree-approval process includes the same rigorous review necessary to ensure new programs meet all appropriate standards, including those set by professional organizations that establish accreditation criteria.

The Bachelor of Science in respiratory care degree to be offered by Mansfield University will replace the current associate degree in the same field. The transition to a baccalaureate-level program was necessitated by the standards and expectations of the American Association of Respiratory Care and the Commission for Accreditation of Respiratory Care. Both organizations now expect respiratory care programs to offer the bachelor’s credential.

Mansfield University currently offers a Bachelor of Science in business administration, with optional concentrations in accounting, management and marketing. The new associate degree will create an additional educational pathway for students seeking a two-year credential as an entry point into business-related careers. It will provide students with a foundation in the principles of accounting, management, marketing and finance, as well as instruction in data analysis, business applications of computer technology and business law. The program’s online option is intended to appeal to working adults who are interested in earning an associate’s degree to further their careers.

The Associate of Science degree in chemical technology at Mansfield will prepare students for chemical technician occupations that include responsibility for process control in industrial or manufacturing plants, and where they may be assigned tasks including data collection, quality control, field sampling, equipment operation, equipment installation and chemical preparation. Mansfield University is located in a region of the Commonwealth that has several manufacturing plants that need individuals with this level of training.

The Associate of Applied Science degree in health education at Mansfield will prepare students for community-based, health-related careers. Graduates of the program will encourage healthy lifestyles and wellness by educating individuals and communities about behaviors that can prevent diseases, injuries and other health problems.

The Associate of Science degree in substance use and behavior disorder counseling will prepare graduates to help prevent substance abuse, to counsel those with substance abuse issues and to perform the necessary intervention techniques. The curriculum has been designed to enable students to develop professional and ethical standards, communication skills, basic counseling skills, interviewing techniques, record-keeping procedures, resource advocacy practices and a deeper understanding and appreciation of behavioral and substance use disorders.

California University’s new Bachelor of Science degree in fisheries and wildlife biology converts an existing concentration into a free-standing degree. Designed
for environmentally conscious students who enjoy time outdoors, the on-campus program provides opportunities to observe species in their natural habitats and to develop hands-on skills under the guidance of faculty who are nationally recognized fish and wildlife management professionals.

The new Bachelor of Science in molecular biology degree at Cal U. will prepare students to perform lab techniques; run assays; analyze and interpret data in biotechnology, drug discovery and clinical diagnostics; culture cells; isolate and analyze biological molecules; design and perform experiments; and evaluate various techniques and experimental models. A survey of biology-related job listings found that approximately 75 percent required or gave preference to candidates with experience in molecular biology, and approximately 90 percent specified molecular biology techniques.

Slippery Rock University’s new Bachelor of Science in cybersecurity degree will offer concentrations in secure software development and security governance. Students will have the opportunity to participate in internships and capstone experiences while studying concepts related to network administration, cryptography, software assurance, secure coding, security tools, security analysis, project management, incident response, automation, data science and data analytics, scripting, post-mortem deep forensics, ethical reasoning, malware behavior and analysis.

For more information on any of the new programs, please contact the appropriate university.

Pennsylvania’s State System of Higher Education is the largest provider of higher education in the Commonwealth, enrolling more than 100,000 degree-seeking students and thousands more in certificate and other career-development programs. Collectively, the 14 universities that comprise the State System offer more than 2,300 degree and certificate programs in more than 530 academic areas. Nearly 520,000 State System university alumni live in Pennsylvania.

The State System is undertaking a System Redesign, which began last year with a top-to-bottom review of the universities and the Office of the Chancellor. As a result of that review, the Board established three priorities to guide the redesign: Ensuring student success; leveraging the universities’ strengths; and transforming the System’s governance structure. The Board also affirmed its commitment to ensuring the long-term sustainability of all 14 institutions within the System so that each may continue to serve students, its region and the Commonwealth. To view regular updates of the redesign, go to http://systemredesign.passhe.edu

The State System universities are Bloomsburg, California, Cheyney, Clarion, East Stroudsburg, Edinboro, Indiana, Kutztown, Lock Haven, Mansfield, Millersville, Shippensburg, Slippery Rock and West Chester Universities of Pennsylvania. The universities also operate branch campuses in Oil City (Clarion), Freeport and Punxsutawney (IUP), and Clearfield (Lock Haven), and offer classes and programs at several regional centers, including the Dixon University Center in Harrisburg and in Center City in Philadelphia.