



October 23, 2017

Legislative UPDATE

Pennsylvania's State System of Higher Education

As **Capitolwire** reports, nearly all of the budget-related bills to complete the 2017-18 state budget are in the hands of the Senate – a [Tax Code bill](#), a [Fiscal Code bill](#), a [Public School Code bill](#), a [capital projects debt bill](#) and a [gambling expansion bill](#). Due to amendments made in the House, one or more of these bills wait for a Senate concurrence vote before going to the governor for his signature.

Here are highlights of the omnibus School Code bill:

- **Section 1216 Evaluation of Applications for Certification:** Prohibits the use of teacher certification assessments by teacher preparation programs as a condition of program completion or graduation
- **Section 1549.1 Commission for Agricultural Education Excellence:** Creates a Commission for Agricultural Education Excellence that will serve as a departmental administrative commission under the concurrent authority of the PDA and PDE; its purpose is to assist in the development, coordination and implementation of related agricultural education programming with the departments.
- **Section 2001-C Definitions, Section 2002-C Duties of public institutions of higher education, Section 2004-C Transfer and Articulation Oversight Committee:** Requires public institutions of higher education to adopt and make public uniform standards for determining and awarding academic credit for prior learning. The standards will be developed by public institutions through their work on the existing Transfer and Articulation Oversight Committee.
- **Section 2603-B Powers and Duties of the Board:** Changes the time frames for the adoption of state master plans for higher education and basic education from every five years to every ten years.

The only remaining bills in the House are the non-preferred appropriations for Pennsylvania's state-related universities. It is not yet clear when funding for these universities will be considered; however, a vote is anticipated once the remainder of the state budget is finalized. A joint Senate hearing on the funding matter is also scheduled for this week.

Senate

Session & Committee Activity

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The Senate is scheduled to convene today at 1 p.m. These bills of interest remain on the Senate Calendar:

[SB 168](#) An Act providing for notice and disclosure of proposed collective bargaining agreements and related documents and for open records.

[SB 503](#) Amends Title 65 (Public Officers), in open meetings, further providing for executive sessions.

[SB 504](#) Amends the Right-to-Know Law, in procedure, further providing for exceptions for public records.

Last week, the Senate approved legislation ([SB 53](#)) sponsored by Senator Greenleaf that would permanently allow for distance education to be included in the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency State Grant Program. The bill now advances to the House of Representatives for its consideration. [Read more.](#)

This week in committee activity, the Senate Education Committee meets on Tuesday to consider these bills of interest:

[HB 1448](#) Amends the Public School Code providing for higher education accountability and transparency.

[SR 228](#) Establishes a Global Education Task Force via a concurrent resolution.

On Wednesday, the Senate Agricultural/Rural Affairs and Education Committees to hold a joint hearing at 1:30 p.m. on the potential impact of the General Assembly not passing spending bills to fund the Commonwealth's four state-related institutions of higher education, the agricultural research and extension programs and the veterinary medicine school. [Watch live.](#)

In other Senate action, the chamber confirmed last week the re-appointment of two members and four new members to the State System's Board of Governors.

Continuing Board members are Mr. Donald Houser of Coraopolis and Mr. David Maser of Philadelphia. The new members of the Board of Governors include Ms. Marion Moskowitz of Malvern, the Honorable Samuel Smith of Punxsutawney, Mr. Neil Weaver of York and student Molly Gallagher of Kutztown. New and continuing Board members' terms of service to the System will run through December 2020. Gallagher will serve until graduated or separated from the System.

House of Representatives

Session & Committee Activity

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The House stands adjourned until the 12 hour call of the chair.

The House Education Committee reported last week the following bills out of committee; these bills could be considered on final passage as soon as the chamber resumes voting session:

[HB 429](#) Amends the Public School Code, in high schools, further providing for courses of study by adding that a student who successfully completes a course in personal financial literacy during grades nine through twelve shall be permitted to apply up to one credit earned for successful completion of the course to satisfy the student's social studies credit requirement for graduation.

[HB 1386](#)

Amends the Public School Code, in certification of teachers, providing for instructional certificate grade spans and age levels. The bill establishes grade spans for Early Childhood Education, Elementary, Middle, Secondary, Specialized areas and Special Education. The bill states the certificates issues remain valid for the term of the certificate. The bill was amended on the House floor to extend the implementation deadline from 2019 to 2021.

[HB 1653](#)

Amends the Higher Education Scholarship Law to permanently provide for the permanent expansion of the Pennsylvania State Grant Program for students enrolled in distance education programs.

The Office of the Chancellor recently indicated its support for the passage of SB 53 and HB 1653 on behalf of the State System and the more than 1,000 students who have benefitted from the Pennsylvania State Grant Distance Education Pilot Program (SGDEPP).

Funded with \$10 million each year from PHEAA's business earnings, nearly 13,000 students at 91 participating schools have benefitted from the pilot program, receiving over \$24.25 million. At participating State System universities alone, in the most recent year for which data is available (2015/16), approximately 1,000 distance education students received a total of \$1.8 million, an average of \$1,700 per student.

Distance education continues to grow rapidly, and including online students in the State Grant program is essential to meeting the needs of adult learners and expanding undergraduate distance education opportunities.

SB 53 and HB 1653 are good for Pennsylvania's students, especially the adult market. Moreover, the legislation would ensure a smooth transition and continued grant eligibility for SGDEPP recipients.

State System

Bill Tracker Report

This tracking information is updated during legislative session weeks. Bills of interest on which action has occurred since the last Legislative UPDATE include:

Actions in the House:

[SB 53](#)

Amends The Higher Education Scholarship Law further providing for eligibility for State scholarship. Last Action: 10-18-17 H Received in the House and referred to House Education

[SB 325](#)

Act making appropriations to the Trustees of the University of Pennsylvania. Last Action: 10-19-17 H Set on the House Calendar

[SB 326](#)

Supplement to the act to accept grant of Public Lands, by the US, to several states, for endowment of Agricultural Colleges making appropriations for carrying the same into effect; & providing for basis for payments of appropriation. Last Action: 10-19-17 H Set on the House Calendar

[SB 327](#)

Supplement to the University of Pittsburgh - Commonwealth Act making appropriations for carrying the same into effect; & providing for a basis for payments, for method of accounting & for certain fiscal information disclosure. Last Action: 10-19-17 H Set on the House Calendar

[SB 328](#)

Supplement to the Temple University - Commonwealth Act making an appropriation for carrying the same into effect; providing for a basis for payments; for method of accounting & for certain fiscal information disclosure. Last Action: 10-19-17 H Set on the House Calendar

[SB 329](#)

Supplement to the Lincoln University - Commonwealth Act making an appropriation for carrying the same into effect; & providing for a basis for payments, for method of accounting & for certain fiscal information disclosure. Last Action: 10-19-17 H Set on the House Calendar

[SB 651](#)

Act providing for the capital budget for fiscal year 2017-2018. Last Action: 10-19-17 H Set on the House Calendar

This update is provided as a courtesy of the Office of the Chancellor as a preview of upcoming legislative activity and a review of action on legislative issues of interest to the State System. The Legislative UPDATE is distributed during legislative session weeks.

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