

Senate confirms West Chester student leader to State System's Board of Governors

Harrisburg – The state Senate has confirmed Rodney Kaplan Jr., president of the Student Government Association at West Chester University of Pennsylvania, to serve on the Board of Governors of Pennsylvania's State System of Higher Education.

Kaplan joins fellow students Brian Swatt, president of the Student Government Association at Indiana University of Pennsylvania; and Joar Dahn, president of the Community Government Association at Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania, on the 20-member board that oversees Pennsylvania's 14 public universities.

Kaplan is majoring in both political science and economics at West Chester, where he is enrolled in the Honors College and from which he plans to graduate in December 2019. He was elected SGA president in April, after having previously served as treasurer. He also is a member of the Board of Directors of Student Services Inc., which oversees student activities and manages the campus bookstore and is student director of Sykes Student Union.

He has served as a community senator for the SGA since 2015, acting as a liaison between the organization and the Borough of West Chester, meeting each semester with the mayor and Borough Council president and attending all Borough Council meetings. He also is a member of the Friars' Society of West Chester University, for which he designs and implements volunteer projects to benefit both the campus and community while fostering "understanding, tolerance and spirit of selflessness through campus and community service."

"I am pleased to welcome Rodney as our third student member," said Board of Governors Chairwoman Cynthia D. Shapira. "He, Brian and Joar will provide their unique perspective to our discussions and deliberations. The role our student members play is extremely important, and I look forward to their full participation in our decision making as we move forward with redesigning the State System."

The System Redesign 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.

The Board of Governors has overall responsibility for planning and coordinating the development and operation of the State System. It establishes broad fiscal, personnel and educational policies under which the universities operate.

The three student members who serve on the Board are selected from among the sitting student government presidents at the universities at the time a vacancy occurs. Once appointed by the governor and confirmed by the Senate, a

student member may serve until he or she is graduated. The three student members participate in all discussions of the Board and have the same voting rights as all other members.

In addition to the three students, the Board comprises 11 members appointed by the governor, four legislators, the governor or a designee and the state secretary of education or a designee.

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 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.