Students, others to spend day at Capitol seeking support for State System

To meet with legislators, staff as part of annual advocacy effort

Harrisburg – “Support for the State System is support for the future of Pennsylvania!”

That is the message more than 150 students, faculty, staff and alumni from the 14 universities that comprise Pennsylvania’s State System of Higher Education will personally deliver Wednesday (April 10) when they meet with legislators and staff members in the Capitol. The visits are part of the System’s annual advocacy efforts, which also will include a mid-morning gathering on the steps of the Capitol’s main rotunda.

The message for legislators is simple, according to State System Chancellor Dan Greenstein: “We need your support to keep the State System the affordable, high-quality option that it is. It matters; it really does.”

Greenstein is among those scheduled to speak at 10:30 a.m., Wednesday, in the rotunda. Other planned speakers are Clarion University President Dale-Elizabeth Pehrsson; Bloomsburg University student Joar Dahn, who also serves on the State System’s Board of Governors; Mansfield University psychology professor Nicolle Mayo; and Highmark Vice President Michael Warfel, a Millersville University alumnus and trustee.

During their meetings in the Capitol, teams from each of the campuses, led by students, will share their personal experiences about their education at a State System university. They will talk about the valuable contributions the universities make to their communities, their regions and the Commonwealth.

They will recite key facts that demonstrate how State System universities are serving the needs of both students and their future employers, including these:

- Nearly 90 percent of State System students are Pennsylvania residents; 1 in 6 college-bound PA high school graduates will attend a State System university.
• Ninety-five percent of State System alumni are employed or are attending graduate school; nearly 90 percent are working in their field of study and the vast majority are working in Pennsylvania.

• State System universities are offering academic programs that align with the state’s workforce needs; almost one-third of all bachelor’s degrees awarded by the universities are in high-demand fields related to either STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) or healthcare. Business is the second most popular field of study.

• The current average total price of attendance is $5,000 less than the amount charged by state-related universities, making the State System universities the most affordable option.

• For every $1 invested by the state, System universities generate $11 in economic impact for a total of $6.7 billion—an average of $300 million per university.

The State System is seeking a 2019-20 state appropriation of $505.8 million, an increase of $37.7 million over the current year’s funding level to ensure continued access to and affordability of a high-quality education for the citizens of the Commonwealth. Governor Wolf has proposed an appropriation of $475.1 million, an increase of approximately $7 million. The new budget is required to be approved by June 30, to take effect July 1.

Pennsylvania’s State System of Higher Education comprises 14 public universities, which combined enroll the largest number of Pennsylvania residents among all four-year colleges and universities in the Commonwealth. With nearly 100,000 degree-seeking students and thousands more enrolled in certificate and other career-development programs, the State System is a vital contributor to the Pennsylvania economy, generating an estimated $6.7 billion of economic activity annually. Collectively, the State System universities offer more than 2,300 degree and certificate programs in more than 530 academic areas. The universities have nearly 800,000 living alumni, the vast majority of whom reside in Pennsylvania.

The State System is undertaking a redesign, guided by three priorities: 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 its member institutions 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.