



**Comments of State APSCUF Vice President Ken Mash to the PASSHE Board of Governors  
July 22, 2010**

Some fifty years ago, the great professor and teacher Leo Strauss of the University of Chicago said that a, “Liberal [arts] education . . . is a training in the highest form of modesty, not to say of humility.” It is with humility, that I say on behalf of my colleagues, that we have no problem with periodic reviews of programs.

Such review is, for a number of reasons, a healthy exercise.

It is with that same humility that I say, on behalf of my colleagues, that many of the programs on the list of programs to be placed in moratorium ought to be there.

However, many of the programs that are on the Chancellor’s Office’s current list, and many of those that are on the list for further review should not be there.

I ask here, on behalf of my colleagues, for some humility. In one fell swoop, the Chancellor’s Office, regardless of good intention, proposes to eliminate, cripple, and threaten scores of programs that are central to a liberal education.

In fact, the Chancellor’s Office asks you to begin to change the very nature of higher education itself. When core programs in the arts, humanities, sciences, and social sciences are neutered, you simply change the nature of higher education.

It was this type of education that was the envy of the world. It was this type of education that benefitted me, my colleagues, the leaders in the Chancellor’s Office and you, the members of this board.

Our mission is to provide quality education at an affordable price. Too often attention is paid to the latter, and not enough attention is paid to the former.

Our students, who come disproportionately from working-class backgrounds, deserve the same quality of education that my colleagues received, that the leadership in the Office of the

Chancellor received, that the University Presidents here today received, that you, the members of the Board received.

It is simply condescending to the citizens of this commonwealth, our students, and their parents to offer them false promises. It is simply improper to suggest that core programs can be eliminated and quality can be preserved.

We are told that there will still be classes. But this simply masks the unintended consequences. Our students will be deprived of the best faculty who will not come to our Universities because they do not want to teach only introductory courses. Our students will be denied the serendipity of taking one class and falling in love with an entire subject. Our students will be deprived of the type of liberal education that the leading CEO's in this country say that they look for in their employees.

We ask you to pause. We ask you to contemplate. We ask you to consider how much thought is going into eliminating so many programs in such a short period of time. We ask you to follow your own directive about how programs should be placed in moratorium. The Chancellor's Office has not. We ask you if it is really necessary to do this today without further consideration of these issues. The same attention should be given to placing programs into moratorium or eliminating them that is given to creating new programs. We ask you to investigate whether all campuses have really had the opportunity to truly discuss the value of these programs. They have not. We ask you to consider the fact that our Universities advertise about the number of programs they have and that our students choose to attend because of the variety of programs.

In short, on behalf of my colleagues and, yes, our students, I ask that you show humility before taking a large step toward fundamentally altering the American notion of a liberal education.

Our students deserve it, our Commonwealth deserves it, and our nation deserves it.