

President's Message

July 14, 2010

PA Universities Mind the Gap

Friday afternoon, Penn State announced its fall 2010 tuition increase numbers. According to their press release, they are increasing tuition by approximately \$800 per year (5.9% for tiered freshmen and sophomores). In other words, the Penn State trustees have agreed to fill the gap of almost \$100 million that the recently passed state appropriation has generated. Penn State's announcement comes after the June 17th announcement by Temple University, another of the Commonwealth's four state-related universities, that they are raising their tuition a similar percentage.

"Penn State's announcement is no surprise," said Steve Hicks, APSCUF president, "their trustees have traditionally paid close attention to the operating expenses, demand for seats on their campuses, and the state appropriation to make critical choices. They have not worried about competing for the highest public university tuition in the country because they have a strong product and a high level of demand in this competitive public school environment for the quality education they provide."

"The state system has the same student demand and the same level of quality. The PASSHE board needs to follow the lead of the state-relateds and raise tuition to fill the \$63 million gap determined by the financial experts in the Chancellor's office. We have four institutions who have announced they are on the verge of laying off faculty, and others rumored to be about to do the same. Leaving a gap for another year in a row would be poor management."

PASSHE has been cited as having the lowest tuition increases among public state systems over the past five years. This has come at the same time as the 14 universities have registered annual records in student enrollment. For fall of 2010, enrollment is expected to reach 120,000 for the first time.

Last year PASSHE increased tuition 3.7%, or \$165, while Penn State increased theirs by 4.5%, almost \$600. This brings the cost of tuition to \$5,200 for PASSHE schools compared to \$14,100 for PSU, Pitt, & Temple.

"Dr. Spanier said that the university's 'vitality was part of the solution to the economic downturn. We simply cannot allow the quality and breadth of our enterprise to be diminished,'" Hicks said. "This message is as true or more true of our 14 institutions, many the largest economic engine in their communities. And cutting their budgets can only damage quality and the alternatives our students have come to expect."

Last month PASSHE announced a full review was concluding with the shelving or discontinuing of over 70 programs across the state. The Board will finalize those discussions on July 22nd.

At that meeting, the PASSHE Board will also determine tuition for 2010-11.