

# Postsecondary Education in PA

Types of Institution, Characteristics, and  
Accreditation,

# Types of Postsecondary Institutions

- University
  - PASSHE
  - State Related
  - Private
- 4-Year College
- Seminary
- 2 Year Private College
- Community College
- Trade School
- Postsecondary Career and Technical Center

# Types of Operations

- Public
- Private Not-for-Profit
  - Foundation-supported
- Private For-Profit

# ▶ Examples of Public Institutions

- PASSHE
- State-related institutions
- CTC's
- Thaddeus Stevens
- Commonwealth Technical School
- Community Colleges

# Characteristics of Public Institutions

- In-state tuition
- Financially backed
- Name recognition
- Alumni network

# ▶ Examples of Foundation-Supported

- Williamson Free Trade College
- Bidwell
- Hope Center

# ▶ Characteristics of Foundation Support

- Tuition can be low or free
- Regional access
- High demand can impact admissions

# ▶ Examples of Private, Non-Profits

- Drexel
- Wilson College
- Orleans Technical College



# Characteristics of Non-Profits

- Name recognition
- Surplus invested in institution
- Low closure rate

# ▶ Examples of Private For-Profits

- Strayer University
- Hussian College
- New Castle School of Trades
- Brightwood Career Institute

# Characteristics of For-Profits

- Often tailored to adults
- Admissions
- Surplus pays investors

# Types of Trade School

- Private Licensed Schools
- Cosmetology Schools
- Barber Schools
- Emergency Medical Technician
- Hospital-based Nursing Schools
- Flight Schools

# State Authorization

- Licensure or Degree-Granting Authorization required for operation
  - Trade schools are licensed
  - Colleges, Universities and Seminaries are Granted Degree-Granting Authority
    - Originally by legislature
    - Later by courts
    - Now by Secretary of Education

# Types of Credentials

- Certificate
  - Certificate vs. Certification
- Career Diploma
- Specialized Associate Degree
  - Fewer General Education Requirements
  - Designed to be a terminal degree
  - Less likely to transfer
- Academic Associate Degree
- Bachelors and above

# ▶ Certificate vs. Certification vs. Prof. License

- **Certificate**
  - Awarded by an institution for completing program of study
- **Certification**
  - Awarded by third-party organization
  - Usually based on passing an exam
- **Professional Licensure**
  - Awarded by the state
  - Permission to practice in the field



# State Authorization vs. Accreditation

- The state does not award accreditation
  - One exception – PDE and CTC's
- State Authorization is mandatory
- Accreditation is awarded by non-profit accrediting agency
- Accreditation is a voluntary seal of quality
- Accreditation is gateway to federal financial aid



# ▶ Accreditation

- Accreditation is optional
- Accreditation not required for some fields
- Required for professional licensure in many fields
- Usually required for credit transfer
- Required for eligibility for federal financial aid and PHEAA aid
- Not required for WIOA funds (Career Link), OVR

# Types of Accreditation

- Institutional
  - Required for financial aid
- Programmatic
  - Some agencies offer both institutional and programmatic accreditation
  - Often required for professional licensure

# Types of Accrediting Agencies

- Regional
  - Usually accredit colleges and universities
- National
  - Usually accredit trade schools

# ▶ Examples of Regional Accrediting Agencies

- Middle States
- Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS)
- Higher Learning Commission (HLC)
  - Central U.S.
- Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WACS)
- New England Association of Schools and Colleges

# ▶ Examples of National Accrediting Agencies

- ACCSC – Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges
- COE – Council on Occupational Accreditation
- ACICS – Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges and Schools
- ACCET – Accrediting Council for Continuing Education and Training

# ▶ Examples of Programmatic Accreditors

- ABHES – Accrediting Bureau of Health Education Schools
- Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education
- Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education

# ➤ Accreditation and Credit Transfer

- Accreditation is usually required for credit transfer
- Regional accreditation is standard for credit transfer to regionally accredited institutions
- Accreditation does not guarantee credit transfer

# College vs. University

- Both grant degrees
- University defined in statute
  - Multi-unit structure with at least 3 units
  - Arts and sciences at undergrad level
  - At least five graduate, professional programs



# Colleges Becoming Universities

- Act 67 of 2014 simplified the process
- Several PA colleges have recently become universities

# ▶ Advantages of Colleges and Universities

- Prestige and recognition of credential
- Usually financially sound
- Rarely cease operation
- Provide services
  - Counseling
  - Tutoring
  - Advising

# ▶ Disadvantages of Colleges and Universities

- Cost and debt
- Commitment
  - 2 to 4 year full-time commitment
- Admissions
  - Complex admission process
  - Standards can be prohibitive for adults
- Academic expectations and intensity
- Social and cultural barriers for adults
- Employment still not guaranteed

# ▶ Advantages of Community Colleges

- Cost
- Flexibility
- Diverse environment
- Support services
- Public support = stability

# Disadvantages of Community Colleges

- High attrition
- General education requirements for degree

# ▶ Advantages of Trade School

- Short-term programs
- Fewer general education requirements
- Admissions
- Direct preparation for career

# ▶ Disadvantages of Trade School

- Cost usually exceeds community college
- Employment outcomes not guaranteed
- Closure more common

# Contact/Mission

For more information on higher education in PA, please visit PDE's website at [www.education.pa.gov](http://www.education.pa.gov)

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