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
For more information on higher education in PA, please visit PDE’s website at www.education.pa.gov

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