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THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

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SENATE RESOLUTION

No. 416 Session of  
2015

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INTRODUCED BY ARGALL, ALLOWAY, TOMLINSON, SCARNATI, MENSCH,  
EICHELBERGER, HUTCHINSON, VANCE, DINNIMAN, FOLMER,  
VULAKOVICH, WHITE, RESCHENTHALER AND RAFFERTY,  
AUGUST 30, 2016

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REFERRED TO EDUCATION, AUGUST 30, 2016

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A RESOLUTION

1 Directing the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee to  
2 conduct a study and issue a report relating to the long-term  
3 sustainability and viability of the Pennsylvania State System  
4 of Higher Education.

5 WHEREAS, The Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education  
6 (PASSHE) was established by the act of November 12, 1982  
7 (P.L.660, No.188); and

8 WHEREAS, Today the system is the largest provider of higher  
9 education in this Commonwealth, with nearly 107,000 degree-  
10 seeking students and thousands more who are enrolled in  
11 certificate and other career-development programs; and

12 WHEREAS, Nearly 90% of enrolled individuals are Pennsylvania  
13 residents; and

14 WHEREAS, Act 188 of 1982 brought together 14 existing State  
15 colleges that varied in size and the number of bachelor degrees  
16 awarded; and

17 WHEREAS, PASSHE now includes several branch campuses and  
18 multi-institution centers in addition to the 14 main campuses;

1 and

2 WHEREAS, An underlying policy goal of PASSHE's establishment  
3 was to provide greater access to affordable higher education in  
4 Pennsylvania; and

5 WHEREAS, PASSHE universities have accounted for more than  
6 one-fifth of the bachelor's degrees awarded in Pennsylvania in  
7 recent years, which is critical to the current and future  
8 economy of this Commonwealth; and

9 WHEREAS, Taxpayers of this Commonwealth are increasingly  
10 concerned about the rising cost of higher education; and

11 WHEREAS, PASSHE represents a significant investment of  
12 taxpayer resources, and it is therefore incumbent upon  
13 policymakers to ensure that the system fulfills its mission; and

14 WHEREAS, Fluctuating appropriations and enrollment levels  
15 coupled with perpetually increasing administrative costs have  
16 resulted in unprecedented fiscal pressures on PASSHE  
17 universities; and

18 WHEREAS, The Board of Governors of PASSHE, the Office of the  
19 Chancellor, university presidents and the Councils of Trustees  
20 are concerned about increasing student debt; and

21 WHEREAS, PASSHE universities are significant economic  
22 enterprises contributing to the overall cultural, educational  
23 and financial success of the regions in which they are located  
24 throughout this Commonwealth; therefore be it

25 RESOLVED, That the Senate direct the Legislative Budget and  
26 Finance Committee to conduct a study and issue a report relating  
27 to PASSHE's long-term sustainability and viability; and be it  
28 further

29 RESOLVED, That for the purposes of this study, sustainability  
30 and viability include:

1 (1) a detailed assessment of all revenue and expenses of  
2 PASSHE, including long-term debt and the current and  
3 projected cost and funding status of health and pension  
4 benefits for at least the next 10 years;

5 (2) college affordability, including a review of the  
6 price elasticity of tuition and room and board expenses at  
7 PASSHE universities over the next 10 years;

8 (3) student enrollment trends at PASSHE universities  
9 over the next 10 years;

10 (4) potential for improved PASSHE efficiencies and  
11 overall cost reductions, including an analysis of faculty  
12 productivity, shared services or potential savings through  
13 university consolidations, closures or mergers;

14 (5) a review of shared governance within PSAAHE that  
15 includes a review of the powers and duties of the various  
16 parties enumerated in Act 188 of 1982, including the Office  
17 of the Chancellor, the Board of Governors, the university  
18 presidents and the Councils of Trustees;

19 (6) evaluation of current and future infrastructure  
20 needs at PASSHE universities, including academic buildings,  
21 residence halls and other student-financed buildings and  
22 including a review of deferred maintenance projects and  
23 future information technology needs;

24 (7) assessment of the contributions made by university  
25 affiliates, subsidiaries and foundations;

26 (8) a review of the human capital needs at PASSHE  
27 universities, including impending retirements over the next 5  
28 to 10 years along with the course offerings required to meet  
29 future vocational needs; and

30 (9) assessment of best practices undertaken by

1       policymakers in other states to address enrollment and fiscal  
2       pressures in public higher education;

3       and be it further

4       RESOLVED, That the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee  
5       conduct a comprehensive review of the legislative intent of Act  
6       188 of 1982 and system policies, procedures and shared  
7       governance to determine whether current practices, policies and  
8       procedures are consistent with the language, intent and  
9       underlying policy of the act; and be it further

10       RESOLVED, That, in compiling its report, the Legislative  
11       Budget and Finance Committee seek input from PASSHE, the Board  
12       of Governors, the Office of the Chancellor, the Councils of  
13       Trustees, the university presidents, the faculty, university  
14       alumni, business leaders, university students and any other  
15       person who may have relevant information; and be it further

16       RESOLVED, That the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee  
17       report its findings and recommendations to the Senate no later  
18       than May 1, 2017.