



Pennsylvania
State Board of Higher Education

APRIL 2026

The Role of the State Board of Higher Education in Workforce and Economic Development



State Board of Higher Education: Overview

- Created via bipartisan legislation in July 2024
- Comprised of 21 members representing:
 - All major higher education sectors
 - Legislators
 - Unions
 - Employers
 - Administration

Mission

The purpose of the Pennsylvania State Board of Higher Education is to provide direction, coordination, and support to ensure that institutions of higher education fully meet the workforce and economic development needs of this Commonwealth, and that all residents of this Commonwealth have access to affordable, world-class postsecondary education.



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Driving a Prosperous Pennsylvania: A Statewide Agenda for Higher Education

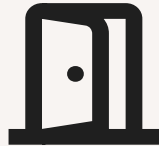
Overview



The Historic Adoption of Driving a Prosperous Pennsylvania



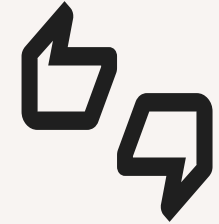
- First higher education strategic plan in over two decades
- Adopted **unanimously** by the Board in February



- Built on **extensive stakeholder input** derived over months of public hearings, meetings and surveys

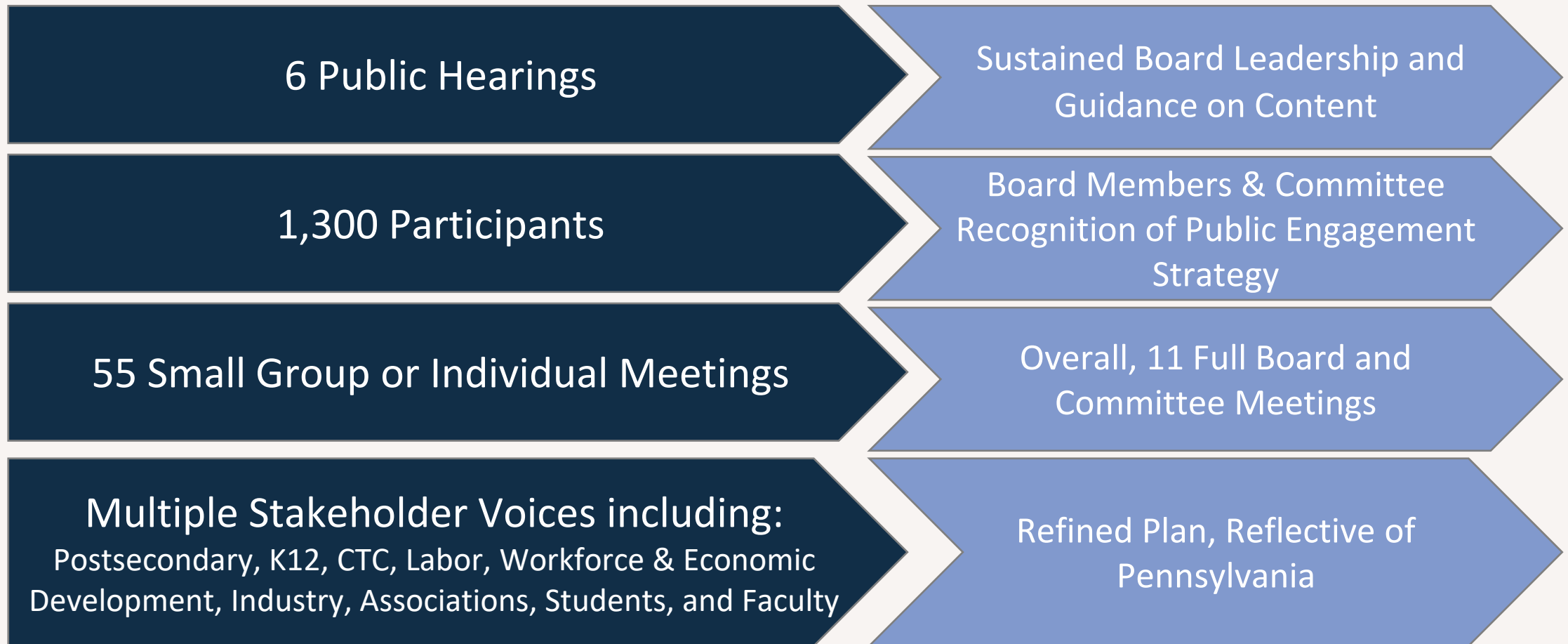


- Positions the higher education sector as a **primary engine of economic prosperity**



- Designed to be a **Roadmap** based on clear goals and organizing strategies
- **Flexible** enough to adjust to changing context and emerging opportunities

Overall Board Engagement and Public Input on Strategic Plan Content



Six Strategic Goals Serve as Pillars of the Plan

Goal 1. Increase Postsecondary Credential Attainment

Goal 2. Ensure Affordable Pathways to Postsecondary Credentials

Goal 3. Support the Economic Development Needs of the Commonwealth

Goal 4. Support the Workforce Development Needs of the Commonwealth

Goal 5. Ensure Accountability and Efficient, Effective Use of State Funds

Goal 6. Strengthen the Fiscal Health and Stability of the Higher Education Sector

Goal 1. Increase Postsecondary Attainment

- Communicate the Value of Postsecondary Education to Students, Families, Communities, and Employers
- Strengthen Pathways from High School to Postsecondary Education
- Sustain and Expand Access to Full Complement of Postsecondary Education Options
- Address Barriers to Retention and Attainment
- Increase Responsible Investment in Higher Education
- Enact Policies to Increase Postsecondary Attainment of Adult Students

Goal 2. Ensure Affordable Pathways to Postsecondary Credentials

- Clearly Communicate the Costs of Postsecondary Pathways in Pennsylvania
- Strengthen Policies to Increase Affordability via K-16 Stackable Credentials
- Maximize Affordability and Reduce Student Debt

Goal 3. Support the Economic Development Needs of the Commonwealth

- Unlock and Communicate Higher Education's Full Potential to Contribute to State, Regional, and Local Economic Development Ecosystems
- Drive Research and Innovation in the Postsecondary Sector
- Support Research-Intensive Universities in Leading Research, Innovation, and Economic Development
- Recruit, Educate, and Retain World-Class Talent

Goal 4: Support the Workforce Development Needs of the Commonwealth

- Utilize and Strengthen Regional Cross-Sector Partnerships to Encourage Collaborative Approaches to Meeting Needs in High-Demand, High-Value Career Fields
- Align Workforce Development Resources with Postsecondary Credentials of Value
- Provide Transparent Information Regarding Credential Pathways, Available Jobs, and Academic Programs at Regional and State Levels
- Increase Student Access to Quality Paid Work Experiences and Skill-Building Opportunities
- Unlock Institutional Flexibility Through Incentives that Allow Timely Delivery of Workforce-Critical Education and Training

Goal 5. Ensure Accountability and Efficient, Effective Use of State Funds

- Incentivize Institutions to Align to Critical State Goals
- Collect, Compile and Centralize Existing Data to Increase Transparency in Higher Education
- Provide Web-Based Dashboards and Interactive Tables Allowing Easy Access to and Analysis of Data

Goal 6. Strengthen the Fiscal Health and Stability of the Higher Education Sector

- Identify and Promote Efficient and Effective Cost-Saving Strategies
- Develop Tools, Resources, and Expertise to Assist Institutions Experiencing Fiscal Instability
- Develop Tools, Resources, and Expertise to Assist Institutions Exploring Mergers and Closures

Recurring Themes

Need to
Create
Conditions for
Success

Build on Existing
Strengths and
Efforts

Communicate
Value and
Contributions of
Sector

Emphasis on
Partnership and
Coordination

- Within Sector
- Across
Sectors

Sector
Inclusivity

Align Resources,
Efforts to
Common Goals

Develop
Recommendations to
Guide Policymaking,
Resources

Use of Data &
Information:

- Track Progress
- Inform Decisions of
Board and Partners
- Provide Transparency
and Accountability



Next Steps: Year 1 Implementation Plans

- ✓ Year 1 Priorities have been identified
- ✓ SBHE Committees to lead efforts across each of the 6 Strategic Plan Goals
- ✓ Committees will draw on existing research and analysis, policy scans, conversations with experts and stakeholders
- ✓ Anticipate public conversations and education sessions as we collectively increase our understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing our sector

Next Steps: Focus on Workforce and Economic Development

- ✓ Five cross-sector regional meetings focused on WFD: June-July
- ✓ Purpose: to chart a strategy for addressing postsecondary workforce credential shortages in each region
 - ✓ Utilize soon-to-be-published Data Dashboard displaying supply, demand and gaps in postsecondary WF credentials
- ✓ Identify and build on strengths, existing partnerships, capacity
- ✓ Determine needed resources and policy to support the coordinated work in each region.

SBHE Economic & Workforce Development Activities

SBHE staff have been invited to organize, participate, advise, support or contribute to the following:

Governor's Economic Development Strategy Group (EDSG)

Workforce Implementation Team:

- Workforce Development Strategy
- Business Attraction/RFP Support
- Lead POC for Higher Education Stakeholders

Priority Projects include but not limited to:

- Data Center and Critical Infrastructure (AWS, Utility/Energy)
- Shipbuilding (Hanwha)
- Bio-pharmaceutical manufacturing (Eli Lilly/Johnson and Johnson)

Statewide and Targeted Initiatives

- R1 Consortium: Keystone Quantum
- Rural Pennsylvania: Rural Talent Lab
- New Federal Policy & Funding for Short Term Training: Workforce Pell

To learn more about SBHE and Driving a Prosperous Pennsylvania:

www.pa.gov/agencies/sbhe