



Public Comment February 16, 2024

1. **Robin Yaure; Faculty** - Submitted written comment

Topic: Budget Model and Support for Commonwealth Campuses:

I have been a faculty member at Penn State Mont Alto for over 30 years. This new budget model, while touted as one that is fairer to all at the university, seems to have gone far to the opposite side of that promise. While one of the major missions of the university regards its land-grant status and support for education in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania as a whole, the budget model supports a much more University Park-centric role for the university. While there is some small wisdom in not slashing all budgets, instead taking the majority of the budget woes out of the campuses will do major damage to the ability to carry out this mission. The campuses are being blamed for losing enrollment over the last 20 years and for having "different" students than those who go to UP. Doing a deeper analysis of the lost enrollment most likely will show that many of these students have been taken in by University Park and the World Campus over the years, with increased quotas and strict rules that bar providing service from the campuses to other units. I urge you to reconsider the damage that will be inflicted by the university to itself during this process. Damaging the campuses will harm the ability to provide a quality 2+2 experience as well as provision of academic programs at the campuses for those students who choose a local experience.

2. **Gretchen Belan; Alumni** - Submitted written comment

Topic: Proposed campus budgets and closures

Dear Board of Trustees,

I am a resident of Fayette County and also a graduate of Penn State Fayette, The Eberly Campus. I have been reading the disturbing news of the plight of the Commonwealth Campuses. Being from the second poorest county in Pennsylvania, my education from Fayette has proved to be invaluable to myself, my family, and my community. Penn State Fayette is a lifeline in our community. I was a non-traditional adult student who began my career at age 25. This campus provided me a way to gain my education and continue to be the only source of income to my family. Because of these reasons, I chose to stay and complete my degree at the Fayette campus. I was not able to pick up and move to University Park. It was never a consideration of going to any other four year university in our area. I was a product of Penn State Extension through the horse and lamb programs. The Penn State Extension programs gave me the footing to become the success I am today. So when choosing to further my education, Fayette was it.

The Fayette Campus has given our community so many things. It is the hub of culture in our county. It is where folks gather to celebrate. It is where folks gather to get answers to the tough questions. The name Penn State Fayette is everywhere in our county. The thought of it no longer being the staple and backbone of this county is truly unacceptable. Have you ever been to the campus to meet the faculty and staff? It sounds funny when they refer to themselves as the "Fayette family" but they really are family. Each plays an intricate niche in the lives of the students at the campus. So caring are each. I know the Eberly endowments helped me afford to gain my education.

I know you have many challenges ahead of you but I wanted to reach out personally to tell you of the difference this land-grant university made to my life. Without this campus, I would not have been able to change my life for the better. It is my sincere hope that you rethink your budgets and see what a difference this campus makes to the western part of Pennsylvania. There are many of us in this county that are working in the community with the education, life skills, and empathy that the Fayette campus taught us. This campus has held strong since 1955 and has endured much. We can endure this too.

I learned that one voice can make a difference. I implore you to keep our campus doors open for those of us in Fayette county that depend on that hub for education, diversity, culture, strength, and empowerment. Thank you for your time..

WE ARE Fayette!

Respectfully,
Gretchen A. Belan

3. Margaret Whyel; Parent – Submitted written comment

Budget cuts to the campuses

Dear Board of Trustees,

I am a parent of two successful women who received their education from Penn State Fayette, The Eberly Campus. Being a single parent and from the second highest poverty stricken county in Pennsylvania, I wanted my children to obtain an education. This was provided by Penn State Fayette. It was affordable and helped my daughters achieve an education that would not have been possible elsewhere. I could not move my family and Fayette campus was the answer. My daughter's were commuters. That campus provided the intellectual knowledge and diversity that they needed to make a difference in their lives. All of us, including myself, were Penn State Extension 4-H participants. They learned valuable lessons and learned how to problem solve. Penn State Fayette assisted with tuition that was a huge barrier for us. This campus gave my daughters the chance to make a difference in this world. Penn State Fayette gives this community a foothold for the future for our children who would not have the chance elsewhere.

Please reconsider your proposed cuts to such a facility. We need this in Fayette. We have friends and neighbors who are employed there.

This campus makes a difference. My daughters are living proof.

Thank you for your time.
Margaret Whyel

4. Andrea Adolph; Faculty; Parent – Submitted written comment

Proposed budget cuts;

I am a twelve-year employee of the University, serving for a decade in academic administration and for two years since as a faculty member, all at the New Kensington campus. Like many, I am writing to comment on the proposed budget changes for the 2025-26 academic year and beyond. The proposed cuts of \$54M to the campus structure is both misguided and myopic, but it will also result in changes that will weaken the University as a whole. My lens is specifically forged through my experiences as a first-generation, low-income undergraduate student who benefitted greatly from access to public higher education. My career has been spent at access institutions including one other multi-campus institution. I understand both the ways in which Penn State operates and the critical role that our campuses play when it comes to educating Pennsylvanians who would otherwise not be able to attend Penn State. The Commonwealth Campuses are a necessary component of socioeconomic mobility across the state, and this is important for the Board to consider as we head toward July. Only your collective decisions can mitigate the outcomes of such a large and inequitable cut to the budget of the Commonwealth Campuses.

Public-facing data make it clear that when it comes to serving students from Pennsylvania, the campuses that fall under the aegis of the OVPCC are directly applicable to our land grant mission, to our commitment to DEIB, and to our abilities to raise up those most in need. For example, first-generation college students make up 40% of the PA-resident students served this year by Commonwealth Campuses; merely 18% of PA residents at UP are first-generation. My concerns are broader, though, than our access and land-grant mandates.

University Park cannot absorb the populations of the approximately six campuses that equate to the proposed budget cuts, and even if all campuses remain open to some degree, many will no longer be attractive to the 23,000 students enrolled at our 19 undergraduate locations beyond UP. Without the state funding brought in by our students—77% of whom are PA residents—our precarious, lagging state funding will decrease. UP also relies on students who pursue a 2+2 option, and without vibrant centers of education near their homes, they will turn elsewhere, subsequently starving many majors at UP that rely on the annual influx of junior-level students. In Fall 2023, OVPCC campuses sent 2272 undergraduate students to the UP campus, with a high of 524 from Harrisburg and a low of 3 from Shenango. Notably, campuses such as Shenango and Schuylkill (with 21 change-of-campus students) are located in two regions that are significantly economically depressed. Their students largely do not wish to—likely cannot—transition to UP. Many students wish to stay in their communities during their years at Penn State and afterward, where they work and give back to enable regional growth and change.

Surely The Board does not wish to again marginalize those students who can stand to gain the most from a Penn State education?

5. Amy Urani; Parent – Submitted written comment

Proposed budget cuts;

Dear Board of Trustees, I am a parent of a December 2023 graduate of Penn State Fayette. I am thankful for this local campus and the opportunity my daughter had to transfer here from a private school where her cost of obtaining an education was significantly higher and unmanageable. At Penn State Fayette she was afforded many financial assistance benefits to offset the cost of tuition thanks to the local donors who support this campus and the students who attend here. Since graduating, she has chosen to remain in Fayette County and work full time. Please reconsider the proposed cuts to this campus as it makes a difference in many student's lives. This campus also provides jobs to local residents who prefer to work in the county and support all the campus has to offer. All the students and faculty and staff deserve to be thought of as people whose livelihood depends on this campus - not just a number to balance a budget. Thank you for listening.

6. Lyndsi Urani; Alumni – Submitted written comment

Proposed budget cuts;

Dear Board of Trustees, I am a December 2023 graduate of Penn State Fayette and I am shocked to hear the disturbing news about the financial troubles of the Commonwealth campuses. I am very fortunate to have been a recipient of grants provided by local donors for local students. This financial assistance helped me stay in school and complete my degree and I have chosen to stay in Fayette County for employment. This is where I grew up and would like to raise my children here. I am upset to hear that PSUF may experience job and program cuts and a potential campus closure. The faculty and staff were very supportive of me coming in as a transfer student and ensuring I was staying on track to complete my degree on time. With their guidance I was able to graduate a semester early. I feel that at any other institution I may not have received that kind of support. I know many local students start at Fayette and transfer to main campus but that was not something I was interested in. I am so thankful to have a school where I could obtain a 4 year degree so close to home. This is the only institution where I could do that in this county and it would be a shame to see it suffer with cuts or a closure. Our county struggles with high poverty rates and many employees depend on their job at the campus to provide for their family. Please consider this as you move forward with your decision making process. We need this campus to be here to provide jobs and an education for future generations. WE ARE FAYETTE! Thank you for your time.

7. Ann Vardo-Zalik; Faculty – Submitted written comment

Budget;

I am deeply concerned with how the proposed budget will affect the campuses. It has been clear from the moment the model was adopted, that faculty input from the campuses was not widely solicited and/or heard. The current model will cause the campuses to do 'more with less', but because we are already doing that, the quality of what we can offer our students will greatly suffer, leading to a lower quality program. No one wants that- the faculty and the staff at the campuses work tirelessly to ensure that students who study here achieve comparable curriculum and engagement opportunities afforded by the UP campus. Cuts are evident, but that is ALL we hear about. We have no idea how our president and administration plan to GROW our campuses. If we are truly important, we should have been

consulted BEFORE a budget model was decided upon. The model should also have been tested to determine the widespread damage it would do to the campuses before implementation. Additionally, DEIB is supposedly an important issue for Penn State. If we slash campus programs and budgets as planned, we are doing a tremendous disservice to the students who may not be able to afford to go to UP for their degree (either for financial or family reasons). Finally, the campuses have a wealth of award-winning faculty, whose focus on teaching, research, and service provides students with relevant training in their fields, in an extremely supportive environment. The fact that these faculty are now on the verge of possibly having their degree programs/ departments' cut, and more worrisome, their contracts not renewed, is a travesty. The campuses will be undergoing curriculum programming reviews by an outside contractor (\$\$\$ wasted), but the extent to which we will have ANY input is unknown. A thorough review of a single program should take 6+ months. We are talking about 20 campuses, each with multiple programs. How can all these reviews be completed with any accuracy by July, especially since a contractor has not yet been identified? The reviews that come back will be quick to slash programs because the research needed to fully understand the program needs and outcomes will be overlooked by such rapid reviews. Penn State's ultimate goal should always be education. Our students should be our top priority. At the campuses, this is evident in everything we do. The current budget model does NOT make students a priority. The faculty and staff are in the dark and our morale is low. Yet we are asked to stay positive until we know more, and then to do as much work as we can to prove our worth. To prove our students' worth. I urge the BOT not to overlook our concerns or our voices. If Penn State, with all its campuses, is truly one university, this budget model will NOT work for the majority within the system. Thank you for taking the time to read this concern.

8. Elizabeth Womack; Faculty – Submitted written comment

drastic reduction to University College budget;

As a faculty member at Penn State Brandywine, I am disheartened to see a budget that appears to take particular aim at the Penn State Commonwealth Campuses. I hope that you will reevaluate this budget and ask for ongoing support for our campuses, because our mission matters: We employ and educate Pennsylvanians across the state, bringing a world-class education to those who cannot afford to live away from their communities to attend university.

The argument for this devastating budget appears to be that our campuses—which disproportionately serve working-class Pennsylvanians and first-generation college students—are “depleting money” from an elite and selective campus, rich in amenities, many miles away from where most Pennsylvanians live. We are not an expense; we are an investment and a public good!

I urge you to consider whether this budget is just to Penn Staters who are first-generation college students, working parents seeking a Penn State degree, Penn State students with disabilities who live with their parents, or Penn State students who act as parents to their siblings while attending school. Consider, too, how many faculty and staff have dedicated our lives to these students and their communities. We hope that you can recognize our work as a key part of the world-class university you are proud to represent.

9. John Craig Hammond; Faculty – Submitted written comment

Commonwealth Campuses;

Penn State's land-grant mission lives at its Commonwealth Campuses. Unfortunately, Penn State's new budget model disproportionately punishes the Commonwealth Campuses. With approximately half of the undergraduate degrees awarded by Penn State earned by students who began or completed their education at a Commonwealth Campus, our contributions and mission should not be compromised.

The Commonwealth Campuses often serve students from struggling communities and from families with lower-than-average household incomes, offering a world-class education to students who may not otherwise have such access. The Commonwealth Campuses enroll a far-higher percentage of Pennsylvania residents than does University Park: in Fall 2023, 77% of students at the Commonwealth Campuses were Pennsylvania residents, while only 57% of students at University Park hailed from this state. Likewise, 28% of PA-resident students at Commonwealth Campuses were from minoritized groups as opposed to 20% at UP. Similarly, 40% of students enrolled at Commonwealth Campuses were first-generation college students; only 18% of that same demographic were part of the undergraduate population at University Park. At New Kensington and across the Commonwealth, a high percentage of our graduates remain in or near their communities after graduation, driving economic growth of communities that are in great need of revitalization. Again, Penn State's land-grant mission lives at its Commonwealth Campuses.

New Kensington and other Commonwealth Campuses have faced ongoing challenges for some time. Systemic underfunding for Penn State from the state legislature has led to tuition increases that make campuses such as New Kensington increasingly unaffordable to the residents whom we are intended to serve. University Park departments and colleges make it difficult for the Commonwealth Campuses to offer many in-demand majors. As a result, we offer only a limited number of degree programs. Furthermore, for decades, University Park has limited our enrollment strategies, prohibiting campuses from advertising their unique degree programs outside of our service areas. Combined with demographic changes, these and other historical admissions practices have hastened the significant enrollment declines experienced by the Commonwealth Campuses. Despite these challenges, Commonwealth Campuses such as New Kensington still manage to offer our students a world-class education. We are a group of dedicated scholars, teachers, staff, and administrators who every day demonstrate the importance of Penn State's land grant mission.

The Commonwealth campuses are now facing \$54 million in budget cuts that threaten to devastate many campuses while further limiting access and opportunity to our state's most underserved populations. Equally important, the new budget model is seriously flawed. It overvalues activities that are concentrated at University Park, such as graduate education, while undervaluing activities unique to New Kensington and other Commonwealth Campuses: small class sizes, community-based and active learning, and personalized attention. We respectfully request that the Board of Trustees withhold approving a budget that will compromise the work of the Commonwealth Campuses. While we agree that the entire Penn State community must work together to re-imagine the role of the Commonwealth

Campuses in the 21st century, the proposed budget model and attendant cuts demean Penn State's land grant mission.

10. Penelope Morrison; Faculty – Submitted Written Comment
Commonwealth Campuses;

I completed my undergraduate degree at a local regional campus (in the south) which is part of a land-grant state system. I know the value and impact land-grant institutions and their campuses can make in the lives of students who otherwise might not have access to higher education. My own experience in a system like PSU gave me an opportunity I otherwise never would have had – as a first-generation student, college was simply not “in the cards” for me. It was too expensive. Having access to a smaller, more affordable regional campus enabled me to go to college. Without that, I would not have had the life and career I have today. In other words, having that access to college was life changing for me. That experience is why I came to Penn State to teach and gave my career to a Commonwealth campus. The university must reconcile how it will continue to provide its land-grant mission under the current constraints of the new budget model. PSU touts that it is “...a multi-campus, land-grant, public research University that educates students from around the world and supports individuals and communities through integrated programs of teaching, research, and service...” Under the “new budget model” however it remains unclear how PSU intends to continue its mission of providing “unparalleled access to education and public service to support the citizens of the Commonwealth...” The Commonwealth campuses directly serve PA residents in ways that University Park simply cannot, and a deterioration of resources provided to these campuses only serves to erode access to higher education across the state. Commonwealth campuses not only enroll more PA students (77% in fall of 23 compared to 57% at UP), but also more first-generation students (40% vs. 18%) and more non-white PA residents (28% vs. 20%) – two groups that are undeserved in higher education. Furthermore, many commonwealth campuses serve socio-economically depressed regions of PA, regions which rely on the land-grant mission of PSU to develop their workforce and infuse their economies with much needed revitalization and renewal. These campuses are therefore vital to the role of the land grant mission – and bear the responsibility for ensuring that mission is carried out throughout the Commonwealth. Depleting their resources and depriving their communities of access to high-quality, higher education not only diminishes the reputation of Penn State as an institution but stands in direct contradiction with the land-grant mission of the university – in short, it re-frames the narrative. “Penn State will only provide some access to education and public service to support some commonwealth citizens.” How does PSU intend to reconcile this discrepancy? More specifically, how will PSU ensure – given the significant reduction in funding allocated to the campuses that are at the heart of the land-grant mission – that all “citizens of the commonwealth” retain “unparalleled” access to high-quality education as per its mission?

11. Rachel Skinner; Faculty – Submitted Written Comment
Budget;

The Commonwealth Campuses of PSU serve a diverse set of students that deserve access to the same quality of education that is available at Main Campus. It is unreasonable to cut resources to these campuses while at the same time asking them to increase enrollment and maintain the highest standards. Faculty cannot be expected to perform at their best when faced with ever-increasing insecurity regarding appointments, lack of communication and transparency regarding staffing

decisions and evaluation criteria, and increasing course loads and class sizes. It is a disservice to our students and devalues their educational investment when they do not have access to instructional excellence. Faculty cannot be high-performing if they don't feel supported or valued for their work.

Meanwhile, Pennsylvania has a large budget surplus but there seems to be no advocacy to increase allocations to the university that serves the most residents of the state. There is a laudable commitment to make the university more accessible to all students, but no corresponding allocation of resources to make that accessibility valuable. It's not clear that there is a long-term plan to create a sustainable budget model, nor does there seem to be consideration of the ramifications of currently proposed cuts on educational quality for Commonwealth Campus students. There is only pressure to slash as quickly as possible, rather to recognize that the university is a public good and that making long-term investments in the education of our citizens offsets the costs of short-term losses.

12. Joe Cuiffi; Faculty – Submitted Written Comment
Commonwealth Campuses;

I was a first-generation college student who started at a PSU campus, and now many years later, I am a faculty member at Penn State. I remember wanting to attend PSU but not being able to afford it or be able to travel to University Park to start my education. I didn't realize it at the time, but the dedication to teaching and personal attention at the campus was the only way I would have survived in college and laid the best possible foundation for my future career.

I am concerned that the question of where we draw the line at the quality of a PSU experience is not a part of the recent budget discussions. The campuses have always battled a reputation they are not of PSU quality, when in fact, they are often our greatest asset in teaching excellence and student experience. Many of the campuses are at a breaking point for funding, and the current budget model seems to assume that there are more cuts possible. Campuses must deliver a standard of PSU education that is equivalent to or even better than University Park. Not only is this critical for the PSU brand, but it is also a disservice to charge PSU tuition (mostly the same across campuses) and provide a less than PSU experience. Laboratory experiences in the sciences and engineering are a prime example of this. Laboratory facilities are expensive to maintain and update, but the facilities must be modern and world-class regardless of campus or class size. It has been very difficult across the campuses to refresh laboratories and equipment over the years, and the current environment is making that more challenging than ever. We already have minimal dedicated laboratory support personnel in comparison to University Park, and we risk losing any remaining staff support under the new budget model. It is not possible to accommodate the budget cuts and serve an experience to our students that meets the standards at PSU. Please consider this when discussing how the budget model must take PSU quality into account.

On behalf of Penn State New Kensington Faculty Senate

13. Lindsey Simon-Jones; Faculty -- Submitted Written Comment
Governance and Long-Range Planning;

Dear Board of Trustees,

Regarding the 14% cut to the Commonwealth Campus budgets included in the budgetary plans

announced on January 22, 2024, we, the Faculty Senate at Penn State Fayette, strongly urge you to reject the proposed 2025/2026 budget.

We are more than just headcount. In Fall 2023, 39% of our PA residents enrolled at Commonwealth campuses were first-generation students, while only 18% of University Park students from this state were first-generation. We are more than just headcount. In addition, 28% of Commonwealth campus undergrads with PA residency are from minoritized populations, while only 18% of undergraduate PA residents at UP are from those same demographics (both populations of students were identified as significant to our success in President Bendapudi's 2/6/2024 op-ed). We are more than just headcount. The Fayette campus is the only 4-year institution in our county, a county that consistently ranks in the bottom socio-economic strata. Some of our programs provide as much as 100% job placement for students who largely remain in our local community.

While we understand enrollments have dropped, and some changes are necessary, a cut of this magnitude and on this accelerated timeline will devastate our region. After years of smaller cuts, we have been told that the vast majority of this 14% will be personnel cuts. We estimate the Fayette campus alone will lose between 17 and 21 of around 90 campus-funded, student-facing employees. Program cuts will mean reduced options in higher education for Fayette and Greene County residents who cannot afford travel to or housing at other Commonwealth campuses. The proposed cuts will make Penn State unobtainable for many students in our area and will mark the beginning of the end of Penn State Fayette.

We are a devoted community of educators. We are willing to make changes to our course offerings and programs, and WE ARE more than just headcount. WE ARE PENN STATE FAYETTE.

Submitted with unanimous support by the Fayette Faculty Senate, 2/13/2024

14. Kristen Pueschel; Faculty -- Submitted Written Comment
Commonwealth Campuses;

The 2+2 programs at the campuses provide a pathway for students to grow close to home, get individualized attention, and then move on. Last spring, our small campus had 52 students (about 12% of our student body) move to other campuses within the Penn State system, with 30 students moving to University Park. This was typical – of the students that were at the Commonwealth Campuses (CC) in Fall 2020, approximately 3000 students from CC, or 11.7% of the CC student body, were at University Park the next year. This is approximately 1/3 of the size of the entering class at UP. This influx of students who have already had training and success at their starting campuses, can be seen in the larger population of upper division students compared to lower division students at University Park. This system benefits both University Park and our 2+2 students.

University Park has announced plans this year to raise their annual 1st-year class to 9,500 students from 9,175, with further infrastructure and housing required if more students are to be admitted. Already, 2+2 students report challenges with finding housing at University Park. The small increase of 325 students at UP will probably translate into a student body increase on the order of 1,200 students at University Park. It would take few campus or program closures to result in losses in excess of 1,200

students to Penn State. There have already been many efforts to improve efficiency at the campuses. Over the last 4 years, the Commonwealth Campuses have already lost 5% of our full-time teaching faculty (54 non-tenure line faculty and 29 tenure and tenure-track faculty). Plans for slashing Commonwealth Campus budgets further must result in losses of programs, or campus closures, and thus additional drops in enrollment in Penn State.

With higher acceptance rates, lower overall GPA ranges, lower tuition, and an opportunity for many PA students to live at home, commonwealth campuses serve a broader range of students. As a math professor, I often interact with 2+2 students for 3 or 4 semesters, so I can see their growth and watch as they learn how to study effectively, how to seek help, and dig into life as a student. We work very closely with our students and get them ready for success at UP and other campuses. Every year, seniors reach out, asking for letters of recommendation for graduate programs and references for employment, though they moved on after their sophomore years. Our students are secure that we know and value them and have seen their growth. Reduced funding or closing campuses will deprive deserving students of the chance for a Penn State education.

On behalf of Penn State New Kensington Faculty Senate

15. Joie Marhefka; Faculty -- Submitted Written Comment
Commonwealth Campuses;

A strength of Penn State's commonwealth campus system is the level of community involvement throughout Pennsylvania. The commonwealth campuses provide workforce development and a pipeline of graduates to start careers and fill the needs of their local economies. At Penn State New Kensington, many students complete community-based projects as part of their courses. Our campus partners with numerous local businesses to offer internships for our students. This provides an excellent learning experience for students, but also gives local businesses a pathway to hire our graduates. The majority of PSNK and commonwealth campus students are Pennsylvania residents (77% of commonwealth campus students are PA residents compared to 57% at University Park) and many remain in the area to live and work following graduation. For example, the vast majority of my biomedical engineering technology graduates stay in the local area following graduation, and almost every hospital in the Pittsburgh area employs at least one, often more, PSNK graduate in their clinical engineering department. The same can be said of other local employers in other fields. The G.R.E.A.T. Program at our campus provides students with opportunities to develop skills necessary for the future workforce, network with local industry leaders and organizations, and build professional experience through internships. This program was developed in response to local employers wanting students to start working with them early in their educational experience, and it was designed to prepare students for internships after their first year. Overall, local industry demand for PSNK graduates is very high, and we have more employers interested in our students than we have students.

Penn State New Kensington further supports economic development in the community by partnering with local industry on workforce development through our office of continuing education and Digital Foundry. The campus also provides resources to local businesses and entrepreneurs through the Corner Launch Box. Many local businesses, from record stores to drone GIS companies, have gotten support from our Corner Launch Box, and Penn State is a major player in revitalization efforts in the community.

Our campus also spear-heads ABC Create, which connects hundreds of teachers across 14 school districts, allowing for collaboration across STEM curricula. Our faculty, staff, and students work in animal shelters, women's shelters, run competitions for high school students, and volunteer in food banks and hospitals. Our student athletes hold sports clinics and volunteer in downtown New Kensington. Many of our graduates give back to the campus by serving on advisory boards and mentoring students. Commonwealth campuses impact their local areas through community involvement, workforce development, and graduates supporting the local economy. Together, the commonwealth campuses spread that impact state-wide. The proposed cuts to the commonwealth campuses' budgets will make it impossible for this level of impact to be sustained in communities throughout Pennsylvania. With fewer resources, we will have a narrower impact in our communities. Please consider the impact on Pennsylvania's communities and workforce when discussing the Penn State Budget.

On behalf of Penn State New Kensington Faculty Senate

16. Margaret Signorella; Faculty; Alumni -- Submitted Written Comment
Budget crisis;

As someone who has worked at a Commonwealth Campus for many years and is devoted to the land-grant mission we carry out daily, it is disheartening to see the Board and the University leadership move to eviscerate the campuses. Penn State does have too many campuses, but every time humane consolidation is proposed it is rejected, usually with the claim that there are political issues. A consolidation of the western campuses in a better location near Pittsburgh has been needed for at least 30 years. (Other consolidations are possible, but the western one is the one that is most pressing.) This would produce a campus with a critical mass of faculty, staff, and students. Yes, I know it would be expensive in the short term, but it might align with Gov. Shapiro's goals for higher education in PA. Dumping more work on exhausted employees at each tiny location while continuing the cutting to the bone will kill the campuses in a long and painful manner and damage the University's reputation. Taking POSITIVE steps will energize us and allow us to carry out the vital land grant mission of the University.

17. Cheri Grubbs; Alumni -- Submitted Written Comment
Proposed Campus Budget Cuts;

Dear Board of Trustees,

I grew up in the shadows of the Penn State Fayette Campus. It literally touches our farmland. I knew at a young age that I wanted to be educated at that campus. It was never a consideration of going to any other four-year institution. It inspired me to become the successful individual that I am today.

I am a non-traditional, first generation, alumni of Fayette Campus. I live in this county and everyday use the values that I learned at Fayette. It is in a socio-economically challenged part of Pennsylvania and the only four-year university in our area. Fayette Campus provided me a way to gain my education and continue to be the sole source of income to my family. University Park was not a feasible option geographically nor financially for me. As a commuter, this campus provided a lifeline for

success.

We know education has been on a downward trend in the past few years. Our campus has not escaped that. The disturbing news of further budget cuts to this campus not only impacts the students but the community. It provides opportunities to experience culture and diversity for Fayette County. It is the hub for community events and a source of information in times of strife. Fayette has a uniqueness to it. There are several programs that have 100% placement, If, you were to approve budget cuts for this campus, what would you be conveying to the future students? Would we be living the mission of a land-grant university?

Fayette Campus provides a steady foothold in the county. It is a source of strength, embodies character, and provides hope for the future. The Eberly Campus name is in every corner of this county. It enables citizens to experience an R1 Big Ten education at a local facility. The Eberly Campus endowments have helped thousands of its students. But this campus is valued for more than just that.

In 1955, this campus was established and since has held strong to the Penn State mission and values. I am one of the values. There are many of us in this county that are working in the community with the education, life skills, and empathy that the Fayette campus taught us.

WE ARE in the county with our students as interns in schools, community centers, and health care industries to name a few. WE ARE volunteers at local non-profits learning to give back. WE ARE the hands and hearts at

Penn State 4-H Extension programs. WE ARE the legacy of Penn State Fayette, The Eberly Campus.

It is my sincere hope that you reconsider the proposed devastating budget cuts to the Commonwealth Campus – Penn State Fayette, The Eberly Campus.

Respectfully,

Cheri Grubbs, Class of 1996

18. Ginett Pineda; Faculty -- Submitted Written Comment

Proposed Cuts for the Commonwealth Campuses at Penn State University;

Dear Penn State Board of Trustees

Penn State University describes diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB) as fundamental to the University's values and mission to support all members of our Commonwealth and beyond. The faculty and staff at Penn State Fayette, The Eberly Campus, are committed to creating a more diverse and inclusive campus community, that embraces differences, supports all individuals, and delivers equitable access to education. Yet, we face considerable challenges in advancing DEIB, including insufficient funding and resources. We urge you to reject the proposed budget cuts to the Commonwealth Campuses and student services, which will compromise DEIB efforts and disproportionately harm under-represented and marginalized students.

In 2022, almost half of our student population were first-generation college students, many from low-

income, marginalized, or underrepresented groups. Our community has the second highest poverty rate in PA; several of our students struggle to afford food, gas, and textbooks. Our campus aims to address our students' complex needs with initiatives such as Peer Mentor Programs, LatinX Advisors, Emergency funds, and First-Generation support programs.

Recognizing Indigenous Peoples as the original custodians of our land, our faculty, staff, and students are deeply committed to public service that honors this acknowledgment. Penn State Fayette has an immense impact on our community, providing numerous cultural and educational experiences like the Coal and Coke Heritage Center, the Wall That Heals, the Shakespeare Festival, the summer concert series, career exploration days, and youth summer camps. Furthermore, through our partnerships with organizations like the American Heart Association, we foster community health and wellness. Our scholarship of services goes beyond our walls; many of our programs, such as HDFS, Nursing, and Spanish, integrate service-learning components that connect academic curriculum to community problem-solving. Our students provide services to organizations such as our Humane Society, Saint Vincent De Paul, East End United Community Center, and many others.

Moreover, initiatives like the LaunchBox project serve as catalysts for local entrepreneurship and economic growth, underscoring our role as not just an educational institution, but as an agent of community progress. Investment in education, particularly institutions like Penn State Fayette, is paramount for fostering innovation, advancing social mobility, and securing a brighter future.

During these uncertain times, The Faculty Senate Committee on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion of Penn State Fayette, The Eberly Campus feels the urgency to expose how these proposed cuts will undermine the progress we have made so far with our students and our community. We urge you to reconsider and to reject the proposed budget cuts. Collaborative efforts between the Board of Trustees, the university administration, and the community can help identify sustainable strategies to ensure the continued operation and success of our esteemed institution. Further cuts into the operational budget would cripple the campus, community impact, and student success.

We remain hopeful that together, we can work towards preserving Penn State's land-grant mission and uphold the principles of accessible and quality education for all.

Respectfully,

Penn State Fayette Faculty Senate Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee

19. Theodore Lucidi; Alumni; Adjunct Instructor – Submitted Written Comment
Disproportionate budget cuts to the Commonwealth Campuses;

As a 1986 graduate of one of Penn State's commonwealth campuses, I would like to express my disappointment in the news that budget cuts may dis-proportionally affect these institutions. The commonwealth campuses serve a vital importance to their communities. They provide a conduit for those in under-served regions, those unable to meet the stringent admissions criteria to the main campus, and those from families unable to afford the higher tuition at University Park.

A strong percentage of PSU graduates have begun their education at commonwealth campuses. Another strong proportion of students have obtained an Associate's degree, and at some campuses, a Bachelor's degree from these local, friendly, and familiar environments. As such, should not these institutions share equally in the financial burdens of the entire university?

Understandably, the heavy financial burdens that today's families endure, have affected enrollments at most institutions of higher education. As one of the primary purposes of colleges and universities is to educate, maybe a potential solution is to refocus and re-prioritize. I would like to encourage the Board to delay the current vote on this matter and consider alternative solutions to the budget crisis.

20. James Berkey; Faculty – Submitted Written Comment

President's roadmap;

I write to express my deep concerns about how Penn State's new "roadmap" has the potential to decimate the Commonwealth campuses and their unique position in ensuring access to an affordable Penn State education for thousands of Pennsylvania residents.

The rhetoric coming from Old Main in recent weeks suggests that the campuses themselves are to blame for this situation and that the university plans to solve this crisis mainly through personnel cuts at the campuses. It is hard to stomach the idea that the campuses are at fault, when they have little control over admissions, capital investments, program and hiring decisions, and their budgets. Everything of substance has to be approved by University Park, so this budget situation seems to be the result of the fiscal mismanagement of UP, not of the campuses. The campuses have also been subjected to annual rescissions for the last 5 years, often announced in the middle of the fiscal year, while the university continuously invests money in programs, new buildings, and athletics at University Park. The campuses already run a tight ship and a budget cut of \$54 million to the campuses will devastate the people who work there. On top of that, it punishes the students and communities that the campuses serve.

There has been and continues to be a complete lack of transparency about how Penn State landed in this budget crisis in the first place and that has been compounded by a lack of transparency about how the administration arrived at their budget reduction numbers and decided how to distribute them. This lack of transparency and information has only fueled rumors about Penn State's plans to close campuses and turn its back on land grant mission of the university. What does seem clear, though, is the university's plan to lay people off, thus increasing the workload of those left behind, restricting the ability of campus faculty to do research, and reducing the opportunities for students in the form of courses, programs, and mentors.

It is also unclear (and frankly astounding) why the university has not been working with the state government and governor's office to mitigate this crisis; indeed, we seemed to be caught flat-footed by Governor Shapiro's recent announcement about reorganizing and reinvesting in the state system of higher education. Why were we not aware of this and why have we not been working with the governor's office to find solutions?

21. Lynn Hartle; Faculty – Submitted Written Comment

Budget Issues;

I am a proud graduate of PSU and now a proud Commonwealth campus faculty member dedicated to quality education, especially first-generation students across PA. To provide that quality we must have high-quality faculty.

I strongly object to personnel reductions. I do not support the idea that cutting people is the only solution to a budget crisis. Faculty on the campuses are already pushed to the limits with additional duties, teaching loads, service, and research responsibilities with less support than our colleagues at the UPark campus. Reducing faculty would further strain our ability to fully support the students that we serve.

We need answers to why there is a budget crisis and why the new budget model is so not transparent. What are the endowments that can be accessed to support through any challenging times? What is PSU doing to recruit and retain students, especially on the campuses so that PSU can increase revenue? Why aren't we working with the state to develop solutions that do not involve layoffs and service reductions? I have more questions than answers.

22. Marinda Harrell-Levy; Faculty – Submitted Written Comment

Concerns related to the Commonwealth campuses;

I am writing to inquire as to why we are not working with the state to develop solutions that do not involve layoffs and service increases at the Commonwealth campuses. I am also writing to register my concern with the messaging that has come to the Commonwealth campuses over the last few weeks, and object to personnel reductions. Cutting people, particularly on regional campuses where these individuals are vital to our mission, is certainly not the only solution to a budget crisis. I want to ensure that the BOT understands the value of Commonwealth campuses from all angles, and ask that you protect them, invest in them, and carefully consider other avenues for balancing the budget.

23. Jennifer Zosh; Faculty – Submitted Written Comment

Comment on budget plan;

I am deeply troubled by the plan to cut the budget for the campuses by 14.1%. As a Full Professor whose entire career has been at Brandywine, I want to highlight the role of the campuses in supporting first-generation students, PA residents, and students coming from less privileged backgrounds. This is the time to put our money where our mouth is and live up to the commitment Penn State has made to support ALL students in obtaining a Penn State degree. At the campuses, it is more common than not that this degree can potentially transform not just an individual's life but an entire family's economic trajectory.

We understand that there is a budget crisis. We understand demographic shifts. We also understand that barriers have been put into place that have limited our growth and, frankly, stunted our ability to offer students the experiences they deserve at the campuses. Approaching this crisis in the way it has been handled will result not just in layoffs, but those left behind will be exploited, unhappy, and looking to go elsewhere. The student experience will worsen. We are our people, and the way this is being approached is breaking those people. I urge you to talk to campus faculty and talk to UP faculty to get a

sense of the vast difference in our jobs, our experiences, and our priorities. I also urge you to talk to campus and UP students to get a sense of the vast differences in their experiences and priorities as well.

Now is the time to think creatively, from a position of strength, and consider ways to bolster the ability of the campuses to support their students. We understand the realities of the situation, but we also can think about ways to leverage the positioning and the people power of the campuses to transform the role of Penn State to the people of Pennsylvania. Right now, we are in a position where we feel abandoned by our institution and must consider how we can ethically recruit students to an institution so willing to turn its back on its supposed mission. We do not know what the future holds but every message thus far suggests that the University will prioritize the most privileged campus and the most privileged student body (at UP). Please work together with us to come through the other side of this crisis stronger and better able to meet the needs of our students and demonstrate that we are who we say we are.