

GROW PA: POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION AND CAREER PREPARATION PLAN IS NOW LAW!

As young people in Pennsylvania increasingly seek education and job opportunities in other states, our Commonwealth faces significant economic and demographic challenges in the years ahead.

[Act 89 of 2024](#) – the Grow PA Post-Secondary Education and Career Preparation Plan – will help reverse these trends and help more young people stay in Pennsylvania to pursue high-demand careers, while limiting the cost of post-secondary education and job training programs. As a result, we will strengthen our workforce and make Pennsylvania much more competitive in attracting the best and brightest students to put down roots in our communities.

Grow PA Changes Our Approach to Higher Education, Career Preparation

The Grow PA plan makes education more affordable and accessible for students who pursue high-demand careers in Pennsylvania. The law creates new programs to recruit the best talent to Pennsylvania schools in industries that will grow Pennsylvania's economy, while also expanding existing financial assistance programs that are already working.

Grow PA will help address the needs of students, families and the workforce and set Pennsylvania on a brighter course.

What Does Grow PA Do?

-Creates the **Grow PA Scholarship Grant Program**, which offers grants of up to \$5,000 per year for in-state students who attend college in Pennsylvania, pursue a degree in a high-demand industry, and agree to live and work in that industry in Pennsylvania after graduation. Grant recipients would be required to live and work in Pennsylvania for at least 12 months for each year they accept the grant. Failure to meet this requirement would result in the grants being converted to a loan that must be repaid.

-Creates the **Grow PA Merit Scholarship Program**, which will help attract high-performing out-of-state students to Pennsylvania educational programs in Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PASSHE) schools. The merit scholarships would allow students pursuing in-demand occupations to pay tuition at in-state rates, rather than out-of-state rates. Like the scholarship program for in-state students, merit scholarship recipients would be required to live and work in Pennsylvania after graduation, or have the scholarships converted to loans.

-Makes historic investments in Career and Technical Education, with an additional \$25 million made available for these programs in the 2024-25 state budget, along with an additional \$5 million for equipment grants. The new funding ensures the state's workforce is ready to tackle the challenges facing the global economy in the years ahead.

Learn more about the initial development of Grow PA [here](#).

Pennsylvania readies new scholarship programs, higher education planning

Pennsylvania will have two new scholarship programs to help its college students pay for degrees linked to “in-demand careers” — like teaching, nursing, farming and business — as part of the \$47.6 billion 2024-25 budget signed Thursday night.

The scholarships were allocated \$25 million and will be overseen by the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency. They were pieces of Senate Republicans’ “Grow PA” proposals pitched to address Pennsylvania’s shrinking.

One program, beginning this year, will offer in-state students up to \$5,000 in annual scholarships. The other, starting next year, will offer to cover the difference between in-state and out-of-state tuition for first-time nonresident students at Pennsylvania’s 10 state-run colleges — including Millersville University.

How to apply

Creating applications and distributing the scholarships under both programs will be overseen by the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency, which already handles several state scholarship programs and student loan services.

Applications for the in-state student scholarships are expected to open no earlier than Sept. 15 this year. For future years, spring applications will open no sooner than Sept. 15 and fall no earlier than Feb. 15.

Those dates are the same for the out-of-state student merit scholarship, but the first recipients won’t be named until the 2025-26 school year.

The legislation appropriating state funds lists the courses of study that can qualify a student for the new scholarships: agriculture,

computer science, criminal justice, business, education, special education, STEM education, engineering, nursing, allied health, trades or “other in-demand occupations” approved by the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency.

Any student who accepts either of the scholarships will be required to live and work in the state after graduation for an additional 12 months for every year they receive a scholarship. If they break that agreement, the scholarship shifts to a loan.

The legislation codifying the programs, passed [unanimously Thursday](#) in both chambers of the Legislature, was introduced by Martic Township state Sen. Scott Martin, a Millersville alumnus who chairs the powerful Appropriations Committee.

Speaking on the Senate floor about the budget deal, Martin said his Grow PA pieces are to “turn around Pennsylvania’s demographic decline.”

Pa. Senate advances key parts of Republican plan to make state colleges more affordable

The Pennsylvania Senate on Monday advanced key components of Republicans' plan to make higher education more affordable and accessible in Pennsylvania. Their plan, which they've dubbed "Grow PA" conflicts with Gov. Josh Shapiro and Democratic lawmakers' own proposal to address the issue of college affordability.

Broadly speaking, the Senate Republicans' plan would target scholarships towards students in and out of Pennsylvania seeking to enter in-demand areas of the workforce by offering funding and scholarships to students studying in those fields. The terms of the program would require the students to remain and work in the state for a period post-graduation.

Two bills aiming to do just that were amended in a session of the full Senate and will likely advance in the coming days.

Another bill that would expand eligibility for the existing Ready-to-Succeed Scholarship program aimed at lower- and middle-income Pennsylvanians studying to enter in-demand areas of the workforce passed with all but three Senators voting in favor of it.

The bill would raise the eligible household income limit from \$126,000 to \$175,000 and lower GPA requirements from 3.25 to 2.5.

According to the bill's sponsor, Sen. Devlin Robinson (R-Allegheny), the bill would make an additional 24,000 students eligible for the scholarship.

"These small but important adjustments will make more students eligible for assistance," Robinson said.

Opposing the bill, Sen. Art Haywood (D-Montgomery), said the new \$175,000 limit would not focus the funds enough towards students from lower-income families. He also opposed lowering GPA requirements to 2.5.

"This creates a change in the prioritization of students that we will support," Haywood said.

These bills directly conflict with Democrats' plan to address higher education affordability. That plan, laid out by Shapiro earlier this year, is largely targeted at limiting tuition costs to \$1,000 across the board for Pennsylvanians attending state schools and community colleges and combining those schools' governance.

Not all of the bills that advanced Monday were partisan or controversial.

One bill, that would offer scholarships to out-of-state students either in foster care or adopted as older teenagers, passed the Senate unanimously.