

Pennsylvania Senate Democratic Policy Committee
PASSHE Redesign
Shawn O'Dell (Lock Haven)
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Shawn O'Dell, President, AFSCME Local 2360, Lock Haven University

Members of the Committee, my name is Shawn O'Dell, and I am the President of AFSCME Local 2360, representing more than 150 employees at Lock Haven University. Thank you for your attention to this important issue today.

Local 2360 represents custodians, groundskeepers, secretaries, carpenters, electricians, locksmiths, mechanics, and a wide array of support staff at the university.

I work as a Clerk Typist 3 at LHU in our Center for Global Engagement, as well as our Global Honors Program. Not only am I an 18-year employee of LHU; I am an alum. I started college at age 35 and earned my BA in English. I also have two children who are LHU graduates. We have degrees with the name of a university that may one day be unaccredited because of PASSHE's consolidation plan.

Through my experiences, not only as a student but also as a member of the staff, I have seen firsthand the dedication of both faculty and staff on our campus, as well as the lasting positive impact they have on students. That is why it is so painful to now see PASSHE attempt to eliminate the jobs of so many of those faculty and staff – especially when it is clear that not nearly enough effort was made to avoid layoffs.

Thankfully, we have a good working relationship with campus-level management at LHU. When they actually took a step back and looked at the numbers, they realized the proposal to outsource our custodial jobs brought minuscule savings, and it was simply not worth it to uproot the lives of these employees. I firmly believe that would be the case at other universities, as well, if they took some time to really look into it. While we are extremely happy to have saved our 40 or so custodial jobs, 30 percent of faculty are still in jeopardy, and that is equally unacceptable.

What is also unacceptable is what I am seeing directly through my job in the Center for Global Engagement. The proposal to consolidate our universities will

hurt our already-struggling programs for international degree seeking students and exchange students. If we consolidate, that is going to make it difficult for international students to fulfill educational requirements that are mandated by immigration law. International students require on-site, face-to-face interaction and are limited to only a certain percentage of online instruction, which PASSHE's proposal relies on heavily. This will affect whether these students can stay at Lock Haven and complete their degrees. And as I said, these programs are already struggling due to lack of recruitment efforts. We've had as many as 125 matriculating international students in the past. We now have 16. And by the way, international students pay a premium price to come to school here, and now it will be even more difficult, if not impossible, to do so.

And I am already hearing from our Admissions office that students who paid their deposit for the fall semester are being contacted and told their major of Recreation Management is no longer available. I have no idea how PASSHE intends to increase enrollment at LHU while eliminating majors and hurting the ability for international students to come here for their education.

I believe in Lock Haven University, and now I feel like I am watching it be destroyed before my very eyes. No matter how much the purveyors of consolidation assure us that our campus will maintain its identity while being a subsidiary of a three-campus university, it is clear that the current proposal poses serious harm to our universities as we know them.

I echo my Edinboro brother's sentiments, and I urge you to please help us protect our state universities. Thank you for your time, and I would be happy to answer any questions that you may have to the best of my ability.