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## **Independent nonprofit colleges prepare graduates for tomorrow's economy**

**Thomas P. Foley, AICUP President**//June 10, 2024//

A seismic shift is taking place in the economy this month, a tremor you might not have felt, but one that you are about to notice. Thousands of bright, well-

trained, and motivated students are graduating from independent colleges and universities across Pennsylvania, poised to join the workforce today and to lead our economy tomorrow.

The independent nonprofit sector educates the highest number of students of any sector of higher education in Pennsylvania (**52%** of all four-year degree-seekers in PA). That's **280,000** people learning at nearly 90 independent centers of education across the state, small and large, from urban universities to rural colleges that include teaching hospitals, research labs, aviation training centers, and entrepreneurial accelerators.

We provide the critical job training and career-focused education that many Pennsylvanians demand. We partner with thousands of employers across the state to create programs that cultivate the skills that will help graduates and businesses alike thrive. AICUP colleges and universities address Pennsylvania's workforce needs:

- **Nursing** shortage? AICUP schools train 69% of all the students pursuing a nursing degree in PA.
- **Teacher** shortage? AICUP schools teach 45% of all teacher certification candidates in PA.
- How about **STEM**? AICUP schools award 55% of all the bachelor's and graduate degrees in STEM fields in PA. Our colleges lead the way in **robotics, LLMs and generative AI research, and medical breakthroughs**.

Pennsylvania is the **2<sup>nd</sup> best net importer** of out-of-state students in the 50 states— and AICUP alone brings in most of them – totalling 30,000 out-of-state first year students who come to PA to go to an AICUP school. 1 in 6 of these students who come to PA to study *stay* in PA to live, work and raise a family—all of those pursuits helping build our state economy and our local communities.

The economic impact of AICUP's 90 colleges and universities is truly game-changing. According to an independent economic impact study, these AICUP

colleges contribute **\$24 billion** annually to the statewide economy, pay **\$1.1 billion** in state and local taxes and support **1 in every 32 jobs** in our state – each with a multiplier effect that cascades throughout our PA economic ecosystem. According to data from the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry, the AICUP independent nonprofit colleges are the **11<sup>th</sup> largest** industrial sector in PA—all on their own. Even if you don't work at one of these independent colleges, every PA resident and taxpayer profoundly benefits from their work.

“Our graduates embody access and upward mobility,” says Dr. Jonathan Green, President of Susquehanna University and Chair of AICUP. “That’s because AICUP educates the largest proportion of lower-income students in the state— **46% of Pell** Grant and **47% of PHEAA** PA State Grant recipients. “We’re giving them the support to graduate on time and at higher levels, and we’re providing them the tools and skills to succeed.”

So, employers, hiring managers, and business owners, take note: You can find the next generation of leaders, innovators, and workers at the commencement ceremonies happening right now at Pennsylvania’s independent nonprofit colleges and universities. Join us in saying **congratulations** to these grads and have the confidence to know you’re hiring the best.

*Learn more about independent education in PA and find the local independent nonprofit college near you at the AICUP website: <https://aicup.org/about-us/members/>*