



# Senate Education Committee

Senator Jeffrey E. Piccola  
Chairman

**Dave Transue**  
*Executive Director*  
[dtransue@pasen.gov](mailto:dtransue@pasen.gov)

**Matt Azeles**  
*Deputy Executive Director*  
[mazeles@pasen.gov](mailto:mazeles@pasen.gov)

**Karen Seivard**  
*Committee Counsel*  
[kseivard@pasen.gov](mailto:kseivard@pasen.gov)

Room 173 Capitol Building, Senate Box 203015, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17120-3015 • 717-787-6801 • 717-783-3722

## BILL SUMMARY

**Senate Bill 1406, Printer's No. 1934**

**Prime Sponsor: Folmer**

### **A. SYNOPSIS:**

Senate Bill 1406 would amend section 6503 of Title 24 of the Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes (24 Pa.C.S. §6503) to allow private, nonprofit colleges or universities to offer additional degrees and institute additional programs and majors without the approval of the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) if the college or university has operated continuously in Pennsylvania for at least ten years and is accredited by a regional accrediting agency.

### **B. BILL ANALYSIS:**

Under S.B. 1406, 24 Pa.C.S. §6503, "Certification of institutions," would be amended to include a new subsection (e.1), "Additional degrees, programs or majors." The new subsection (e.1) would provide that, subject to the authority of the State Board of Education to regulate teacher education programs under section 2603-B of the Public School Code of 1949 and the authority of PDE to regulate teacher education programs under 22 Pa. Code Ch. 49, a private, nonprofit college or university may offer an additional degree that is not specified in the institution's certificate of authority to operate granted by PDE, or may institute an additional major or program, if either of the following applies:

(1) The college or university has operated continuously in Pennsylvania for the immediately preceding ten years and is accredited by a regional accrediting agency recognized by the United States Department of Education (i.e., the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools); or

(2) PDE approves the college or university's offering of the additional degree, major or program pursuant to the procedures under which PDE grants a certificate of authority.

The bill would allow private, nonprofit colleges and universities who meet the ten-year continuous operation and accreditation requirements to bypass PDE approval for their new degrees, majors and programs. Those colleges and universities that do not meet the ten-year continuous operation and accreditation requirements would be able to institute new degrees, majors and programs only with PDE approval. The authority of the State Board of Education and PDE to regulate teacher education programs would not be affected by this bill.

### **C. SUMMARY OF RELEVANT EXISTING LAW:**

Currently, whether a private, nonprofit college or university is required to obtain PDE approval to institute a new degree, major or program depends upon the language of the college or university's specific charter. Although some institutions have latitude to determine for themselves whether to take such actions, other institutions (primarily those institutions that were formed more recently or modified their charters after their initial formation) are required by current law to undergo an extensive PDE review process. The proposed legislation would lift this requirement for those private, nonprofit colleges and universities with longevity of at least ten years and demonstrated quality as evidenced by regional accreditation.

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THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

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SENATE BILL

No. 1406 Session of  
2012

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INTRODUCED BY FOLMER, PICCOLA, DINNIMAN, TOMLINSON, ERICKSON,  
McILHINNEY, BAKER, RAFFERTY, ORIE, GREENLEAF, EARLL, PIPPY,  
VANCE, YUDICHAK, LEACH, ALLOWAY, ARGALL, PILEGGI, YAW, BROWNE  
AND TARTAGLIONE, JANUARY 31, 2012

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REFERRED TO EDUCATION, JANUARY 31, 2012

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AN ACT

1 Amending Title 24 (Education) of the Pennsylvania Consolidated  
2 Statutes, in private colleges, universities and seminaries,  
3 further providing for certification of institutions.

4 The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania  
5 hereby enacts as follows:

6 Section 1. Section 6503 of Title 24 of the Pennsylvania  
7 Consolidated Statutes is amended by adding a subsection to read:  
8 § 6503. Certification of institutions.

9 \* \* \*

10 (e.1) Additional degrees, programs or majors.--Subject to  
11 the authority of the State board to regulate teacher education  
12 programs under section 2603-B of the act of March 10, 1949  
13 (P.L.30, No.14), known as the Public School Code of 1949, and  
14 the authority of the department to regulate teacher education  
15 programs under 22 Pa. Code Ch. 49 (relating to certification of  
16 professional personnel), a private, nonprofit college or  
17 university may offer an additional degree that is not specified

1 in a certificate received under subsection (a) or may institute  
2 an additional major or program if either of the following  
3 applies:

4 (1) The college or university satisfies both of the  
5 following:

6 (i) The college or university has operated  
7 continuously in this Commonwealth for the immediately  
8 preceding ten years.

9 (ii) The college or university is accredited by a  
10 regional accrediting agency recognized by the United  
11 States Department of Education.

12 (2) The department approves the additional degree, major  
13 or program pursuant to the procedure for issuing a  
14 certificate provided in subsection (e).

15 \* \* \*

16 Section 2. This act shall take effect immediately.