



9/16/2024

The Honorable Pete Schweyer
Democratic Chairman, House Education Committee
128 Main Capitol Bldg.
Harrisburg, PA 17120

The Honorable Jesse Topper
Republican Chairman, House Education Committee
400 Irvis Office Bldg.
Harrisburg, PA 17120

RE: House Education Committee Hearing – September 16th, 2024

Dear Chairman Schweyer and Chairman Topper,

On behalf of Peirce College, I want to thank you and the House Education Committee (Committee) for holding today's informational meeting on adult education in the Commonwealth and for the opportunity to submit this note on the record.

Peirce College is an independent, nonprofit, regionally accredited college in Philadelphia that is the only institution in Pennsylvania dedicated exclusively to serving working adult students. Further, Peirce has the highest percentage of adult students at any college or university in the country. With this in mind, we are particularly interested in the issue of adult education and are thrilled that the Committee is taking the time to discuss it in more depth.

As you may already know, several weeks ago we announced an exciting merger with Lackawanna College. Once the merger is complete, our combined institution will be the largest private, nonprofit open enrollment institution in Pennsylvania at the undergraduate level, with an expanded geographic and programmatic presence to serve students in eight locations and online. This partnership will leverage Lackawanna's dedication to degrees, certificates and innovative learning experiences with Peirce's commitment to career-focused, flexible academic programs and student services designed around the unique needs of busy adults, empowering learning at all stages of life. It is important to note that this merger will not change our students' experience, but rather enhance the opportunities they are offered. We are excited to continue advancing opportunities for adult learners throughout the Commonwealth and look forward to this union coming to fruition.

Peirce was originally founded in 1865 to provide career-focused education for soldiers returning from the Civil War and has since developed a long history of serving adults from across the Commonwealth. Our mission is to empower adult learners to improve their lives by achieving career goals through academic offerings aligned with evolving workforce needs. Today, we serve nearly 1,400 undergraduate and graduate students, 71% of whom are residents of Pennsylvania. Our student body is 76% female, and more than 70% of our students identify as persons of color. The average age of a Peirce student is 39.

Peirce's students represent a traditionally underserved segment of adult learners in search of a way to transform their lives and those of their families, with more than half of the student body considered lower-income. Our model is designed with the adult learner in mind, as we understand that adults cannot always sacrifice their personal and professional responsibilities to go back to college. We have built programs that involve a network of collaborative



partners dedicated to leveraging diverse credit-earning options that are aligned with stackable, market-driven academic programs that meet the unique needs of adult students and employers. This model maximizes transfer credits and leverages prior learning assessment to lower costs, expand access, and increase flexibility for adults who need it the most in the Greater Philadelphia Region.

At Peirce College, we are in the business of removing barriers and empowering students to achieve their goals. Our students – and most of the 39 million people in the United States with some college credits but no degree – are generally hyper-focused on career advancement. They know that higher education is the path to get there. To meet this need, we provide solutions that help students see results sooner than traditional programs.

One innovative Peirce program I'd like to highlight, Career Bridge, specifically prepares students with the skills, certifications and credentials needed for jobs that pay family-sustaining wages and guides them to job opportunities in less than a year. Modeled after a formerly successful program for opportunity youth, the Career Bridge program uses proven methodology applied to today's unique circumstances to provide upskilling opportunities for people who lost jobs, primarily due to COVID-19, and many of whom will return to a workforce where their jobs are no longer in demand or even exist. Career Bridge directly translates Peirce's mission into action. In a matter of months, graduates will be qualified for high-demand, high-growth occupations that pay family-sustaining wages in the following industries/sectors:

- Cybersecurity
- IT User Support
- IT Network Support
- Medical Billing
- Medical Coding
- Project Management
- Financial and Business Operations
- Sales & Client Service

All in all, our students demonstrate grit and determination in completing their programs despite the multitude of challenges facing them. We are proud to serve Pennsylvania's adult learners and take very seriously our role in advocating for policies and investments that address their needs and fuel their success.

We are very appreciative of the Committee's continued interest in adult education in Pennsylvania and would welcome any questions you or your members may have regarding Peirce and our role in the adult education space. Please find additional information attached.

Sincerely,

Joseph Guzzardo
Chief of Staff and Chief Marketing & Strategy Officer, Peirce College

Attachments



Who We Serve

Peirce College is one of the only institutions in the country to focus exclusively on serving adults.

- Approximately 76% of students at Peirce College are women
- More than 70% of students at Peirce College are people of color
- Approximately 52% of Peirce's student body live in the City of Philadelphia
- Approximately 50.5% of students at Peirce are eligible to receive Pell grants

What Makes Us Unique

What sets Peirce College apart from every other institution in Pennsylvania? The students we serve and how we serve them.

We serve our students in ways that fit their lives, not the other way around.

We know that adults cannot sacrifice their personal and professional responsibilities to go back to college, so at Peirce, they don't have to. We've created a new model that delivers affordability, flexibility, academic integrity, and career relevancy for adult learners.

Our model is built on a network of collaborative partners dedicated to leveraging diverse credit-earning options that are aligned with stackable, market-driven academic programs that meet the unique needs of adult students and employers.

This model maximizes transfer credits and leverages prior learning assessment to lower costs, expand access, and increase flexibility for adults who need it the most in the Greater Philadelphia Region.

Our Students: At a Glance

Enrollment

Total students: 1,359

Undergraduate: 1,229

Graduate: 130

Gender

76% women

24% men

Ethnicity

53.7% Black/African American

20.2% White

11.8% Hispanic/Latino

2.9% Asian

9.1% Chose not to disclose

1.3% Two or more races

0.1% Non-citizen/Non-resident

0.5% Native American/Alaskan

0.4% Hawaiian/Pacific Islander

Average Age

39 years old

Location

52% Philadelphia

71% Pennsylvania

Financial Aid

54.5% Receive Pell grants

75.6% Some form of financial aid

Accreditations & Approvals

- American Bar Association (ABA)
- Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs (ACBSP)
- Commission on Accreditation for Health Informatics and Information Management (CAHIIM)
- Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE)
- Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) alignment



CAREER BRIDGE



Like GPS for Navigating Career Change

Career Bridge at Peirce College prepares students with the skills, certifications and credentials needed for jobs that pay family-sustaining wages, and guides them to job opportunities in our region.

Using a career-integrated advising model, the College first identifies a student's career goal and then guides the student through the program to achieve that goal in less than a year.

Peirce College has embedded professional, employer-recognized certifications into short, stackable Career Tracks that validate students possess the skills and credentials employers are looking for.

Graduates are connected with employment opportunities in the region and receive personalized coaching and assistance to apply for jobs, prepare for interviews and leverage the Peirce College alumni network.

The Career Bridge program is designed to accelerate and prepare a diverse talent pipeline for employers and support the region's equitable recovery. Peirce College has raised approximately \$1 million to support the program and is working with local workforce agencies to recruit students and employers interested in participating in the program.

For more information on Career Bridge or becoming a partner, contact Dr. Stephanie Gibbs-Emenaka at:

sgibbs-emenaka@peirce.edu or 215.670.9279

Program at a Glance

Target Audiences:

- Low-wage workers, displaced workers and those who are unemployed, as well as veterans and their spouses and other career changers.

Program Length:

- Students can complete the program in less than a year, depending on their course loads and schedules.

Career Tracks:

- Medical Billing
- Medical Coding
- IT User Support
- IT Network Support
- Cybersecurity
- Project Management
- Financial & Business Operations
- Sales & Client Service
(see back for more information)

Customization:

- New tracks can be developed based on the needs of employers, partners and students.

Current Career Tracks

Medical Billing: 16 stackable credits

- Certificate of Proficiency in Medical Billing
- American Academy of Professional Coders (AAPC) Certified Professional Biller (CPB™) certification.

Medical Coding: 22 stackable credits

- Certificate of Proficiency in Medical Coding
- American Academy of Professional Coders (AAPC) Certified Professional Coder (CPC®) certification.

IT User Support: 16 stackable credits

- Certificate of Proficiency in IT Support
- CompTIA IT Fundamentals (ITF+) certification
- CompTIA and A+ certification (optional)

IT Network Support: 16 stackable credits

- Certificate of Proficiency in IT Support
- CompTIA IT Fundamentals (ITF+) certification
- CompTIA Network+ certification (optional)

Cybersecurity: 19 stackable credits

- Certificate of Proficiency in Cybersecurity
- CompTIA Security+ certification

Project Management: 16 stackable credits

- Certificate of Proficiency in Project Management Administration
- Google Project Management Certificate

Financial & Business Operations: 19 stackable credits

- Certificate of Proficiency in Client Service
- FINRA Securities Industry Essentials (SIE) certification

Sales/Client Service: 16 stackable credits

- Certificate of Proficiency in Client Service.

How It Works: 5 Steps

Students work one-on-one with advisors and counselors to complete the program.

- 1** Peirce works with students to explore and navigate sustainable employment opportunities aligned with their career goals.
- 2** Peirce determines how a student's existing skills, training and prior learning may map to skills required for sustainable occupations.
- 3** Peirce determines if a student can earn credit for those skills via the College's Prior Learning Assessment program.
- 4** Peirce identifies the training, certification and credentials still needed for the desired occupation; students then complete the Career track to acquire the training, certification and credentials needed for the job.
- 5** Peirce connects students with employment opportunities in the region, and helps students apply for jobs, prepare for interviews and leverage the College's alumni network.