

# Counties at Work

## Allegheny County, Pennsylvania Case Study

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## About NACo:

The [National Association of Counties](#) (NACo) **strengthens America's counties**, serving nearly 40,000 county elected officials and 3.6 million county employees. Founded in 1935, NACo unites county officials to:

- **Advocate county priorities** in federal policymaking;
- **Promote exemplary county policies** and practices;
- **Nurture leadership skills** and expand knowledge networks;
- **Optimize county and taxpayer resources** and cost savings; and
- **Enrich the public's understanding** of county government.

The National Association of Counties Research Foundation (NACoRF) is a non-profit organization recognized by the U.S. Department of the Treasury Internal Revenue Service as a 501c3 public charity providing education, technical assistance and research to counties. NACoRF's mission is to ascertain, develop and distribute knowledge about county governments and training of public officials, prospective public officials and other interested parties.

## About NACo's Landscape Analysis:

In partnership with the [ECMC Foundation](#), NACo conducted a national landscape analysis on counties' role and decision-making authority in post-secondary education. This analysis identified impactful county efforts including directly allocating local funds, pursuing regional and intergovernmental partnerships to leverage federal resources and coordinating post-secondary education systems with county systems, such as health and human services, as well as with local private industry. Such efforts maximize educational and employment opportunities and increase access for residents. Recently, counties have led and supported their post-secondary education institutions in mitigating local challenges related to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Through an electronic survey and group and individual interviews, NACo examined how county leaders:

1. Make decisions affecting the post-secondary education sector;
2. Allocate public funding impacting higher education institutions;
3. Create partnerships with the post-secondary education sector to strengthen its connection with other systems; and
4. Work to slow the spread of COVID-19 in post-secondary education settings.

In conjunction with NACo's report ["Counties At Work: Counties Support Post-Secondary Education and Workforce Opportunities for Residents."](#) NACo published a set of case studies sharing county examples and best practices in creating cross-sector partnerships with higher education systems to improve economic resiliency and mobility, workforce preparedness, educational attainment and gainful employment for residents. County leaders representing local colleges and universities, workforce boards and human services agencies participated in a series of interviews with NACo to share their local efforts and best practices. For more information, please contact Rashida Brown, Associate Program Director for Children, Youth and Families at [rbrown@naco.org](mailto:rbrown@naco.org) or Arabella Pluta-Ehlers, Program Manager for Children, Youth and Families at [aplutaehlers@naco.org](mailto:aplutaehlers@naco.org).

# Counties Support Post-Secondary Education and Workforce Opportunities for Residents

## Allegheny County, Pennsylvania

**Interviewees:** Dr. Quintin B. Bullock, President, Community College of Allegheny County; Erin Dalton, Deputy Director, Allegheny County Department of Human Services; Abigail Horn, Deputy Director, Office of Community Services, Allegheny County Department of Human Services; Jennifer Liptak, Chief of Staff, County Executive Rich Fitzgerald

**County name, state:** Allegheny County, Pa.

**Rural, suburban, or urban:** Urban

**Population:** 1,218,452

**Poverty rate:** 11.0%

**Unemployment rate:** 4.0%

**Number of post-secondary education institutions in the county:** 43

**Student enrollment in the county's post-secondary education institutions:** 118,700



### About Allegheny County, Pa.

Allegheny County, Pa., home to the city of Pittsburgh, is the state's second most populous county. Allegheny County's major industries include advanced manufacturing, healthcare and financial and business services. The county is also home to several headquarters of Fortune 500 corporations, including U.S. Steel Corporation, PNC Financial Services Group, PPG Industries, and H. J. Heinz Company. It is also home to several major colleges and universities such as Carlow University, Chatham University, LaRoche College, Penn State Greater Allegheny and the University of Pittsburgh and community colleges and technical institutions such as the Community College of Allegheny County (CCAC), Empire Beauty Schools, Institute of Medical and Business Careers, Pittsburgh Career Institute and Institutes of Aeronautics and Mortuary Science and Vet Tech Institute.

### **The county role in post-secondary education**

Allegheny County Council serves as the county government's legislative branch and includes fifteen elected officials.<sup>i</sup> On January 1, 2000, the Home-Rule Charter went into effect. Primary powers and duties of the council involve approving and amending legislation submitted by either the County Executive or a Council member, permitting use of county land, levying taxes and fees, confirming or rejecting appointments for county agencies and authorities and annually adopting a balanced county budget, which in FY2020 was \$959.8 million.<sup>ii</sup> Allegheny County residents also elect a County Executive who provides leadership and strategic direction and ensures that policy is implemented effectively and efficiently.<sup>iii</sup>

Allegheny County's government leaders engage local stakeholders and work in collaboration with CCAC to create career readiness pathways and increase educational opportunities for residents. While county government leaders work closely with CCAC to allocate resources in supporting college operations, instruction and workforce training opportunities for students, they do not have direct decision-making authority in matters involving CCAC and other post-secondary education systems in the county. However, Allegheny County's Executive and County

Council nominate and confirm CCAC's Board of Trustees. The county board approves CCAC's budget and works closely with CCAC president Dr. Quintin B. Bullock and his team to develop policies for operations and educational programming.<sup>iv</sup>

### **Funding for post-secondary education institutions and programming**

In addition to appointing the Board of Trustees, Allegheny County's government shows commitment to CCAC by providing a local funding match, which supports both operation and capital funds. In its 2020 budget, Allegheny County allocated \$800,000 for capital costs to the college and \$26,695,977 for operating costs.<sup>v</sup> Allegheny County is the second largest source of government appropriations for CCAC, second to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.<sup>vi</sup> CCAC submits its financials to the county each year to include them in the county's comprehensive annual financial report.

### **Coordination and collaboration for improved workforce outcomes**

*Allegheny County's community, government and post-secondary education leaders share data and information and regularly convene to discuss approaches for*



“One out of every three county residents selects CCAC as their college of first choice. Additionally, about 94% of graduates remain in the region.”

Source: Community College of Allegheny County.  
#Success: 2018 Annual Report



connecting residents to educational and employment opportunities. Partner4Work leads county and citywide coordination on workforce readiness programming and activities. Partner4Work is a non-governmental organization that connects adult and youth jobseekers in Allegheny County and the city of Pittsburgh with businesses and employers and links them to job readiness supports.<sup>vii</sup> Partner4Work’s Board of Directors and various advisory boards convene local stakeholders to support collaboration among higher education and public and private sector partners on career readiness activities. The Board of Directors is primarily comprised of business leaders, but also includes CCAC staff and members of state, county and city government, as well as representatives from unions and non-profit and community-based organizations. Standing committees discuss and develop approaches for expanding educational and employment opportunities for certain populations, such as youth ages 14-21 and older adults.<sup>viii</sup> Allegheny County’s Department of Human Services (ACDHS) and Partner4Work co-lead the Learn & Earn Summer Youth Employment Program, a community-wide effort to help low-income youth and young adults gain the skills and experience necessary in becoming successful members of the region’s workforce. Since 2015, Learn & Earn connected nearly 6,000 young people with jobs across 400 worksites and returned more than \$6 million

in wages to the local economy.<sup>ix</sup> Other youth programming supports young adults as they complete high school, earn a General Educational Development certificate or prepare for post-secondary education or credential programs.<sup>x</sup>

*Allegheny County connects residents to vital county-based social services and supports to reduce systemic barriers for residents seeking and obtaining a higher education degree, credential or training and employment.* In 2018, about 52 percent of ACDHS clients were disconnected from the labor force.<sup>xi</sup> These groups also face challenges with housing and unemployment. Thus, ACDHS provides interventions for increasing clients’ participation in higher education while connecting them to services that help meet their basic needs such as housing, access to food and transportation and other social supports. To better serve families and children, ACDHS is utilizing a holistic, two-generation approach that simultaneously addresses parents’ and children’s needs. Parents engaged in higher education and employment are connected to the county’s family centers, which provide support and education on child development and parent-child relationships.

*ACDHS partners with CCAC to remove barriers to education by connecting students to wrap-around comprehensive services and supports that are co-located on campus grounds.* Through the partnership, CCAC offers Resource

Navigators, who support students in navigating systems that connect them to community resources, such as child care, housing, mental health services and more. Since the program's creation, navigators have referred over 700 students to ACDHS and other community resources.<sup>xii</sup> ACDHS trains navigators so they are knowledgeable about the social services available in the county and service delivery practices. ACDHS and CCAC collaborated on developing the program's design and jointly apply for grant funding. CCAC also offers a Pathways to Success in Healthcare Grant to provide county residents interested in a career in the healthcare field with financial assistance. Grant recipients are connected with wrap-around services to address academic, financial and personal issues that often become barriers to educational attainment. This includes assistance with child care, housing and transportation.<sup>xiii</sup>

### **Slowing the spread of COVID-19 in post-secondary education settings**

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Pittsburgh Council on Higher Education (PCHE), a voluntary consortium of ten post-secondary education institutions in the county, is serving as a resource for slowing the spread of COVID-19.<sup>xiv</sup> Through PCHE, the county's post-secondary education institutions share information and coordinate their reopening plans. The Allegheny County Health Department is advising institutions on COVID-19 testing, contact tracing, social distancing and reporting COVID-19 cases.

In addition to state and local funds, post-secondary education institutions received direct federal funding through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act to support student aid and institutional costs. CCAC received \$3,993,740 to provide emergency financial aid grants to students experiencing financial hardship and \$3,993,739 to cover institutional costs resulting from changes to instruction delivery due to COVID-19.<sup>xv</sup> In Pennsylvania, post-secondary education institutions can also use Governor's Emergency Education Relief funds for COVID-19 related expenses such as personal protective equipment (PPE), sanitizing and cleaning products, technology for online instruction or health applications to assist with contact tracing.<sup>xvi</sup> The county also distributed funds, on a per capita basis, to PCHE institutions to assist with reimbursement for PPE and other needs arising from the pandemic.

During the pandemic, CCAC increased its online course offerings, with online enrollment up by 25 percent. CCAC also offers financial emergency assistance for students

experiencing an unexpected emergency or an economic hardship. CCAC's Resource Navigators, on-campus food pantries, and clothes closet support students presenting barriers in meeting basic needs. Students also receive public assistance and other supports.

### **Conclusion**

Allegheny County leaders view CCAC and other local post-secondary education institutions as a community asset and continue to provide funding and collaborate on career readiness efforts. County and regional efforts, led by Partner4Work and ACDHS, have helped the county improve the educational and employment outcomes of residents experiencing economic hardship through service navigators and on-campus resources and by addressing the local workforce needs of the community. Post-secondary education institutions coordinate with one another and with county-based social service agencies to help meet students' basic needs and support them during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**“We have a motto here, in our county and our city that we work together, we help each other, we’re hard workers...There’s always been a very cooperative relationship with the community college because it’s such an asset. And we treat it as something that’s vitally important to this community and that’s why we support it the way we do.”**

-Jennifer M. Liptak, Chief of Staff to County Executive  
Rich Fitzgerald

# Endnotes

<sup>i</sup>Allegheny County. (n.d.). *Your County. Your Government*. <https://www.alleghenycounty.us/>

<sup>ii</sup>Martines, J. (2019, December 3). *Allegheny County's \$1B budget includes no tax increase*. Trib Live. <https://triblive.com/local/pittsburgh-allegheny/allegheny-county-council-approves-2020-budget>

<sup>iii</sup>Allegheny County. (n.d.). *Office of the County Executive*. <https://www.alleghenycounty.us/county-executive/mission.aspx>

<sup>iv</sup>Community College of Allegheny County. (n.d.). *Board of Trustees*. <https://www.ccac.edu/president/board-of-trustees/index.php>

<sup>v</sup>Allegheny County. (n.d.). *County Budgets*. <https://www.alleghenycounty.us/budget-finance/county-budgets.aspx>

<sup>vi</sup>Community College of Allegheny County. (2019). *#Success: 2018 Annual Report*. [https://www.ccac.edu/president/\\_files\\_president/2018-annual-report\\_web.pdf](https://www.ccac.edu/president/_files_president/2018-annual-report_web.pdf)

<sup>vii</sup>Partner4Work. (n.d.). *What is Partner4Work?* <https://www.partner4work.org/about/history/>

<sup>viii</sup>Partner4Work. (2020, September 25). *Board of Directors' Briefing Book*. <https://www.partner4work.org/uploads/p4w-board-briefing-book-for-09-25-2020.pdf>

<sup>ix</sup>Partner4Work. (n.d.). *Learn & Earn*. <https://www.partner4work.org/programs/learn-earn/>

<sup>x</sup>Partner4Work. (n.d.). *Young Adults Programs*. <https://www.partner4work.org/programs/young-adults-programs/>

<sup>xi</sup>Allegheny County Department of Human Services. (2020, February 18). *Labor Market Experiences of Allegheny County Department of Human Services Clients*. <https://www.alleghenycountyanalytics.us/index.php/2020/02/18/labor-market-experiences-of-allegheny-county-department-of-human-services-clients/>

<sup>xii</sup>Community College of Allegheny County. (n.d.). *Resource Navigators*. <https://www.ccac.edu/student-services/resource-navigators.php>

<sup>xiii</sup>Community College of Allegheny County. (n.d.). *Pathway to Success in Healthcare Grant*. <https://www.ccac.edu/workforce/hpog.php>

<sup>xiv</sup>Pittsburgh Council on Higher Education. (n.d.). *Home*. <https://pche-pa.org/>

<sup>xv</sup>Community College of Allegheny County. (2020, August). *Year-End Report*. [https://www.ccac.edu/president/\\_files\\_president/year-end-report-aug2020.pdf](https://www.ccac.edu/president/_files_president/year-end-report-aug2020.pdf)

<sup>xvi</sup>Pennsylvania Department of Education. (n.d.). *Governor's Emergency Education Relief (GEER) Funds*. <https://www.education.pa.gov/Schools/safeschools/emergencyplanning/COVID-19/GEER/Pages/default.aspx>

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