TIOGA COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS, PENNSYLVANIA

RESOLUTION NO. _____ OF 2026

A RESOLUTION OPPOSING THE PROPOSED CLOSURE OF COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY'S MANSFIELD CAMPUS AND CALLING UPON THE COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA, ITS STATE SYSTEM OF HIGHER EDUCATION, AND TIOGA COUNTY AND MANSFIELD BOROUGH PARTNERS TO PRESERVE AFFORDABLE, IN-PERSON PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION IN MANSFIELD AND PLAN FOR THE FUTURE OF THIS IMPORTANT STATE RESOURCE

WHEREAS, on January 7, 1857, Mansfield Classical Seminary opened its doors to 105 students, beginning an educational tradition carried forward today by Commonwealth University's Mansfield campus. For generations, Northern Tier families have counted on Mansfield as a place where their children could earn a degree close to home. Among its graduates are teachers who went on to educate generations of children in our local schools.

WHEREAS, the students, faculty, staff, alumni, and families who give the University its character are our neighbors, customers, volunteers, and friends. The campus, the Borough of Mansfield, Tioga County, and surrounding communities share a local economy and a social and cultural life. The activities that bring people together on campus, in town, and throughout the region are part of what makes Mansfield and Tioga County home.

WHEREAS, Mansfield Borough and the campus share sanitary and stormwater systems, and campus and local first responders assist one another. A decision to close the campus would reach beyond University property to the people who operate and pay for shared infrastructure, the responders who rely on one another, the businesses that provide local livelihoods, and the schools that employ Mansfield graduates throughout Tioga County and the surrounding communities.

WHEREAS, when the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PASSHE) sought public input on university integration, its leadership identified continued access to in-person education at each campus and preservation of each institution's economic and cultural contributions to its region as purposes of integration. Those purposes remain important to the people of Mansfield and the Northern Tier.

WHEREAS, the Borough of Mansfield and Tioga County have sought opportunities to work with Commonwealth University leadership to identify ways to increase enrollment and community participation at the Mansfield campus. On October 14, 2026, President Jeffery Osgood addressed Borough Council during public comment and stated that any further reductions would be limited in scope. Neither PASSHE nor Commonwealth University sought the County's input on the proposed closure before the November 17 announcement. **Tioga County remains eager, as it has been since the university integration, to be invited to the table for meaningful discussions about the long-term viability of Mansfield University, including restructuring and right-sizing campus buildings, evaluating facility reuse and operating costs, and developing an appealing, workforce-aligned curriculum that can attract students and increase enrollment. The County remains committed to working in close alignment with Mansfield Borough, the University, and the Commonwealth to identify a viable future for the campus and surrounding communities.**

WHEREAS, on November 17, 2026, PASSHE announced that its Chancellor had directed President Osgood to submit, by December 8, 2026, a framework for ending operations at Mansfield by June 30, 2028. Of Commonwealth University's three campuses, the directive applies only to Mansfield. Closure requires authorization by the PASSHE Board of Governors. Before that vote has occurred, the University has stopped accepting applications to Mansfield for all 2027 terms.

WHEREAS, the Tioga County Board of Commissioners recognizes the projected decline in the number of high school graduates in much of the region, the University's financial challenges, and the cost of maintaining campus facilities. The Board also recognizes its responsibility to the children growing up here and to adults pursuing a degree while working or supporting a family. For a Northern Tier student who needs to live at home, losing the ability to attend a public university in person in Mansfield may put a degree, and the better-paying career it could make possible, beyond reach.

WHEREAS, the 21 days between the public announcement and the deadline for the closure framework include the Thanksgiving holiday. In the Board's judgment, that schedule gives students, faculty, staff, local officials, and residents insufficient time to assess the consequences, develop credible alternatives, and have those alternatives considered before the framework is submitted.

WHEREAS, in 2017, when Cheyney University faced serious financial challenges, the PASSHE Board of Governors authorized a task force to develop a financially sustainable model for its continued operation and sought input from students, employees, alumni, community leaders, and elected officials. The Tioga County Board of Commissioners seeks a comparable opportunity for the people of Mansfield, Tioga County, and the Northern Tier to help shape the future of their campus.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Tioga County Board of Commissioners, Tioga County, Pennsylvania, adopts the following positions and requests the following actions.

The Governor of Pennsylvania, the Pennsylvania Secretary of Education, and the Pennsylvania Secretary of Community and Economic Development.

The members of the Pennsylvania General Assembly representing Tioga County and Mansfield Borough.

The PASSHE Chancellor and each member of the PASSHE Board of Governors.

The President of Commonwealth University and the members of its Council of Trustees.

The Mansfield Borough Council and Borough Manager.

1. Partner with Tioga County to plan Mansfield University's future. The Tioga County Board of Commissioners calls upon Governor Josh Shapiro, the PASSHE Board of Governors, the PASSHE Chancellor, and Commonwealth University to partner directly with Tioga County and Mansfield Borough and our region to determine what comes next for Mansfield University, an essential public educational and economic resource for our community. The Board opposes the proposed closure and requests meaningful, ongoing participation in evaluating a financially sustainable path for continued operations, appropriate restructuring of campus buildings and facilities, expanded enrollment, and future uses that preserve the campus's public value.

2. Align state initiatives with a Mansfield revitalization strategy. The Board requests that Governor Josh Shapiro and his administration work with Tioga County, Mansfield Borough, PASSHE, DCED, and the Pennsylvania Department of Education to identify how the Commonwealth's economic development strategy, workforce development and career training priorities, and higher education access and affordability initiatives could support continued educational operations and new uses at Mansfield. The partners should evaluate employer-informed degree and certificate programs, teacher preparation, health care and technical workforce pathways, adult and continuing education, shared facilities, adaptive reuse of underutilized buildings, and potential public-private partnerships. The County requests identification of applicable state funding, technical assistance, and implementation partners, without presuming that any particular grant or program is available or approved.

3. Appoint a Mansfield task force before any closure vote. The Board requests that the PASSHE Board of Governors establish a task force charged with developing and publicly presenting a financially viable plan for continued campus operations. Students, faculty, staff, alumni, Borough and county officials, school districts, employers, and regional service providers should serve alongside representatives of PASSHE, the University, and the Commonwealth. Tioga County offers to participate alongside Mansfield Borough and help bring regional partners to the table.

4. Extend both deadlines by at least one year. The Board asks the Chancellor to extend the December 8, 2026, deadline for the framework to no earlier than December 8, 2027. The Board asks the PASSHE Board of Governors to defer any closure vote until the task force has presented its findings and the public has had an opportunity to respond. If the Board of Governors ultimately authorizes closure, the County requests that the campus continue operating until at least June 30, 2029, to give students, employees, and the region time for an orderly transition.

5. Reopen Mansfield applications for 2027. The Board calls upon Commonwealth University to resume accepting applications to the Mansfield campus for all 2027 terms while the PASSHE Board of Governors considers the campus's future. Prospective students and their families should receive clear information about the pending proposal and what the University can guarantee about where and how students could complete their degrees.

6. Hear directly from the people affected. The Board asks the PASSHE Board of Governors to hold a public hearing in Mansfield before any closure vote. The Board further asks the task force to identify which degrees Northern Tier students could still complete in person within commuting distance, how area schools would recruit teachers, and how local agencies would maintain shared sanitary and stormwater systems and emergency response arrangements. Students, employees, residents, and alumni should have the opportunity to speak about the social and cultural activities they sustain together and what their loss would mean to Mansfield Borough, Tioga County, and surrounding communities.

7. Request legislative review and an independent regional economic impact assessment. The Board requests that the Education Committees of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives and Senate convene a public legislative hearing in Mansfield before any closure vote. The Board asks the Appropriations Committees of both chambers to examine the cost of continued operations during the proposed one-year extension, the costs that closure would shift to residents and local governments, and the state support needed for a viable plan to keep the campus open. The Board specifically requests that the Commonwealth, working with the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED), commission and fund a comprehensive, publicly available assessment of the proposed closure's direct, indirect, and long-term economic impacts, including employment, student and visitor spending, local businesses, property values and tax bases, municipal utilities, public safety, housing, regional workforce development, and the future use and maintenance of campus facilities. Tioga County and Mansfield Borough should help define the assessment's scope, and its findings should be released before any closure vote.

8. Transmit this resolution. Upon adoption, the Chief Clerk of Tioga County shall transmit copies to the following recipients.

The Governor of Pennsylvania, the Pennsylvania Secretary of Education, and the Pennsylvania Secretary of Community and Economic Development.

The members of the Pennsylvania General Assembly representing Tioga County and Mansfield Borough.

The members of the Pennsylvania General Assembly representing Tioga County and Mansfield Borough.

The PASSHE Chancellor and each member of the PASSHE Board of Governors.

The President of Commonwealth University and the members of its Council of Trustees.

The Mansfield Borough Council and Borough Manager.

ADOPTED by the Tioga County Board of Commissioners this _____ day of _____, 2026.

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Shane Nickerson
Chair, Tioga County Board of Commissioners

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Sam VanLoon
Commissioner

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Marc Rice
Commissioner

ATTEST: _____
Chief Clerk