

Twenty-five Years of Educational Innovation: a Brief History of Act 101

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Twenty-five years ago Mr. K. Leroy Irvis, then the Speaker of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives, had a vision for the reformation of higher education in the Commonwealth. Mr. Irvis recognized that here were hundreds of Pennsylvanians -- perhaps thousands -- who were denied the opportunity to pursue higher education due solely to economics. Mr. Irvis knew the impact of impoverishment on these potential students. He knew the devastation of poverty: poor facilities, poor and inadequate instruction = poor schools. K. Leroy Irvis also knew that it was not just the students who were being denied opportunity; the Commonwealth, too, was being denied the opportunity to tap a vast pool of skills and services it so sorely needed for its economic and cultural growth.

Mr. Irvis, with support from the Pennsylvania Black Conference on Higher Education (PBCOHE) and the Pennsylvania Association of Developmental Education (PADE) and many, many other individuals and groups who knew the educational needs and concerns of the economically disadvantaged, created the Pennsylvania Higher Education Equal Opportunity Act of 1971. This Act changed the lives of thousands of persons who would never have attempted higher education AND forever altered the face of higher education in the Commonwealth.

On Thursday, August 31, 1971, HB1213 No, 101, An Act was passed:

No. 101

AN ACT

HB 1213

Providing for the Commonwealth support for institutions of higher education to furnish learning and special counseling services for undergraduate students whose cultural, economic and educational disadvantages impair their initial ability to pursue successfully higher education opportunities, and making an appropriation.

APPROVED - The 31st day of August, A.D. 1971.

MILTON J. SHAPP

The foregoing is a true and correct copy of Act of the General Assembly No. 101.


Secretary of the Commonwealth

With the imprint of the name of then governor, Milton J. Shapp, and witnessed by the Secretary of the Commonwealth, C. Delores Tucker, Act 101 of 1971 allowed the Secretary of Education, consistent with regulations adopted by the State Board of Education, to contract with institutions of higher education for program implementation. Specific services to be offered by contracted institutions were not mandated, nor were they limited in scope. However, the law authorized remedial learning, counseling and tutorial services; it specifically prohibited the use of program money for payment of tuition, room or board, or other institutional costs or fees incurred by students.

The Office of Equal Opportunity in the Department of Education, with guidelines from the State Board of Education, was created to be responsible for conduct of the program.¹ For academic year 1971-72, the following 31 institutions were awarded grants:

Community College of Allegheny County	College Misericordia
California State College	Northampton County Area Community College
Carnegie-Mellon University	Pennsylvania State University
Cheyney State College	Philadelphia College of Art
Chestnut Hill College	Philadelphia College of Textiles and Science
Clarion State University	Community College of Philadelphia
Drexel University	University of Pittsburgh
East Stroudsburg University	Saint Francis College
Edinboro State College	Seton Hill College
Franklin and Marshall College	Shippensburg State College
Gannon College	Swarthmore College
Harrisburg Area Community College	Temple University
Indiana University of Pennsylvania	Waynesburg State College
Kutztown State College	West Chester College
Lincoln University	Widener College
Millersville State College	

These institutions presented the students with a wide range of educational opportunities. The low income student could now select from a two year community college, a four year public college, a four year private college, a college with a science and technology focus, or a college which focused on the traditional seven liberal arts. Within the individual programs there was diversity. Some programs had a single major or emphasis such as engineering, art, design or the physical sciences. Other institutions offered the well documented curricular advantages of a single gender or a predominantly single gender environment. Act 101 was designed to give the low income educationally disadvantaged student true educational opportunity, opportunity to pursue higher education, opportunity to select the program and the institution of his or her choice.

Immediately, the funded institutions set about implementing their mandate:

PROGRAM OBJECTIVE: To assist institutions in making the changes which effectively meet the educational needs of educationally by-passed Americans by providing for special admission considerations and a comprehensive support system of counseling and tutorial

¹ PA Legislative Budget and Finance Committee. A Program Evaluation Report On the Higher Education For The Disadvantaged Program. 1976: 3.

support which develops the students' cognitive and affective skills necessary for college graduation.²

For most institutions, this was a bold experiment. They did not have in place the services needed to sustain the new "non-traditional" student. Below is a list of some of the many documented higher education innovations conceived of and implemented by Act 101 programs and later institutionalized for non-program students as well.

Support Services:	Career/Life Planning and Development Activities Counseling/Student Development Centers Supplemental Instruction Tutorial Centers/Learning Laboratories
Curricular Developments:	Alternative Instructional Methods Computer Literacy Courses Computerized Testing Developmental Studies Freshman Studies Freshman Seminars: Transition to College, Student Success, Study Skills Pre-college Summer Programs
Administrative Developments:	Academic Monitoring Systems Alternative Admissions Criteria to Expand Access Modification of Academic Policies to Extend Opportunity Student Tracking and Database Systems Studies of Student Retention, Graduation, Transfer and Job Placement Rates
Special Activities:	ACT 101 Club Multi Cultural Celebrations Special Scholarships XAE Honor Society

Part of the vision of Mr. Irvis was that Act 101 and its students were going to bring about permanent, lasting change:

Although the Act provides financial assistance to the institutions, it is clear that the full dimension of the program will affect not only the campus but the community. It is important that the institutions be aware from the beginning of the full implications of the program.³

The Irvis vision also anticipated that the non-traditional student might encounter early obstacles. That being the case, all institutions had to make a commitment "to at least a two year retention" for Act 101 students.⁴ Later Guidelines more fully developed the concept of commitment by stating that "a two year retention for Act 101 students at four year institutions (one year for two year institutions) must be built into the program since this student must be allowed sufficient time to discover what is required for him/her to succeed and the project staff to discover how it can best service the individual."⁵

To aid the project director and staff, Act 101 required an additional group of ombudsmen, the Advisory Board. Initially referred to as the Council to Equalize Higher Education Opportunity,⁶ this Council was to guide but not direct the program:

¹ PA Legislative Budget and Finance Committee. A Program Evaluation Report On the Higher Education For The Disadvantaged Program. 1976: 1.

³ PA Department of Education. Act 101 Guidelines. 1971: 1.

⁴ PA Department of Education. Act 101 Guidelines. 1971: 1.

⁵ PA Department of Education. Act 101 Guidelines. 1976-77: 5 of 9.

⁶ PA Department of Education. Act 101 Guidelines. 1971: 3.

The program in each institution should be guided, but not directed, by a Council to Equalize Higher Education Opportunity. As described in the Master Plan, it should be broadly representative of the administration, the faculty, the student body and community persons to consider problems of the disadvantaged and to coordinate plans to resolve these problems. It should be given the services of a staff member and should be empowered to create subcommittees as needed. The total size of the Council is to be determined by the institution. Experience suggests a group of approximately 12. The Council should be used fully to advise on institutional priorities and program development, recruitment and retention, funding and supportive services affecting economically and educationally disadvantaged students. It should be specifically engaged in this program as one area of its overall responsibility. It is suggested that an orientation program for the council and institution be implemented in order to facilitate effectiveness of relationship, clarity of roles and the basic emphasis of the Act.⁷

The name Council was changed to Advisory Board in 1974. Later, additional language was added to further clarify the role of the Board: "An orientation program for the Board and institution should be implemented to assure that they have a good working relationship, are clear about their roles, and that they have a good working relationship, and that they understand the basic philosophy and goals of the Act."⁸

Although programs had great freedom to be innovative with no particular mandated services, retention through graduation was always first and foremost:

The end-of-year program report will include an evaluation of program results in terms of program objectives. Evaluation will also be done by the Secretary of Education as part of his annual report on the total state program.⁹

To add to these year end evaluations and to assure all publics that these were real programs serving real students, three Field Representatives were employed. Each was assigned to a region (Eastern, Central or Western, corresponding to the Commonwealth's regions) to supply technical assistance and to implement ongoing formative evaluation. To further document program success and/or to strengthen programs, external evaluators were retained to add additional evaluations on an annual basis.

In the Spring of 1974, the State Act 101 office initiated a specific data collection project designed to measure student achievement in relation to amount of program tutoring and counseling services received. This project was labeled by the Department of Education as a "Multiple Regression Study of Performance" and was based on a random sampling of Act 101 students through use of social security numbers. First compiled and printed results of this project were made available early in 1975.¹⁰

As the programs were put into place, the State Act 101 office and the individual project directors recognized the need for in-service training. State wide conferences were established to give directors and staffs the latest techniques and strategies to improve program effectiveness. Sessions on counseling, tutoring, peer counseling, study habits -- the full range of student services -- were held to ensure that all students in all of the programs would have an equal educational opportunity. The state wide conference proved to be so effective that they are now held annually in the fall and spring.

A dynamic change occurred in the administrative organization of Act 101 in 1976. Due to budget constraints and other personnel concerns, the Central Region was eliminated leaving but the Eastern

⁷ PA Department of Education. Act 101 Guidelines. 1971: 3.

⁸ PA Department of Education. Act 101 Guidelines. 1978-89: 4 of 9

⁹ PA Department of Education. Act 101 Guidelines. 1971: 4.

¹⁰ Higgins, Martin J. and Glanville, Maree. The Impact of Act 101 Programs in Pennsylvania. November 1983, p.iii.

and Western Regions. To better advise the programs, offices for Field representatives were officially established in Philadelphia and Pittsburgh. This facilitated accessibility to the programs for the Field Representatives. The move proved to be fortuitous, since 1984 brought further budget tightening which resulted in the annual external evaluations being reduced to a bi-annual format. At many institutions, the Advisory Boards had been conducting yearly internal evaluations which proved to be an invaluable resource in documenting program success, i.e., that *Act 101 Works!!*

And indeed *Act 101 Works!!* A ten year longitudinal study commissioned in 1982 and completed in November 1983 documented the following:

- 1.e The persistence of graduation of Act 101 students is above the U.S. average and far above what might be expected in the absence of special treatment.
- 2.e The attitude of Act 101 students towards college services is more positive than that observed nationally especially for those services (counseling, tutoring, etc.) which constitute the core of the program.
- 3.e Act 101 alumni tend to be more positive about their college experiences than U.S. alumni in general.
- 4.e Administrators on the various campuses are well aware of the Act 101 program and are highly supportive of it.¹¹

Act 101 has much of which to be proud. Studies both formal and informal have documented that Act 101 students have a positive attitude about their college experience.¹² Several doctoral dissertations have studied the Act 101 program and have recommended that the design be a paradigm for further inquiry and replication.¹³ Noting the need for documenting Act 101 success to all publics, the Office of Postsecondary and Higher Education, Pennsylvania Department of Education, in 1993, began a formal systemic evaluation of the Act 101 program going back to each of the Program years since 1971-72. The study concludes that "during the period between 1971-72 to 1991-92, Act 101 appears to have had a positive effect on promoting access to higher education for culturally, economically or educationally disadvantaged students."¹⁴ Further Department of Education studies in 1992-93 through 1993-94 report the same comparable high retention and low attrition rate for Act 101 students.¹⁵

In 1971, Act 101 served 1,124 students at 31 institutions with an appropriation of \$1 million; in 1996, the program serves 14,323 at 76 institutions with an appropriation of \$7.8 million. Opportunity to attend higher education is available for almost twelve times as many low income Pennsylvania residents today than 25 years ago. The number of institutional options has increased by 145% giving greater access to low income residents from all parts of the state. Since 1990, part-time students have been eligible to participate as well, expanding opportunity to a greater segment of the popula-

¹¹ Higgins, Martin J. and Glanville, Maree. The Impact of Act 101 Programs in Pennsylvania. November 1983, p.iii.

¹² George E. Brechman. A Tabular Summation of 1984-85 Higher Education Equal Opportunity Program Survey Finds. Bureau of Higher Education Planning and Research, PA Department of Education, May 1986: 2-3.

¹³ Baylor-Ayewoh, Tandelaya Kateri. The Pennsylvania Higher Educational Equal Opportunity Program Act (Act 101): A Thesis in Educational Theory and Policy. Pennsylvania State University, May 1989.

Graham, Patricia. Preservice and Inservice Peer Counseling Training Components In Higher Educational Opportunity Programs in Pennsylvania. University of Massachusetts, Amherst. February 1995.

¹⁴ Senier, John. Higher Education Equal Opportunity Programs In Pennsylvania. Office of Post Secondary and Higher Education, PA Department of Education. October 1993: IV.

¹⁵ Senier, John. Descriptive Statistics on Higher Education Equal Opportunity Programs in Pennsylvania: 1993-94. John Senier, Office of Post Secondary and Higher Education, PA Department of Education, February 1995.

Act 101 Program Profile 1971 - 1996¹⁶

	1971-2	1995-6	<i>Change</i>
Total # Institutions	31	76	+e 145%
Public	10	14	+e 40%e
Private	13	44	+e 238%e
State Related	4	5	+e 25%e
Community Colleges	4	13	+e 225%e
Total # Students Served	1,124	14,323	+e1,174%e
Status:			Part-time students have been eligible since 1990
Full-time	100%	89%	
Part-time	0%	11%	
Age:			
17-21e	64%	46%	28%
22 and oldere	36%	54%	+e 50%e
Racial/Ethnic Background:			
African American	79%	30%	62%
Asian/Pacific Islander	1.5%	4%	+e 167%e
Hispanic	4%	5%	+e 43%
Native American	0.5%	1%	+e 100%e
White	15%	60%	+e 300%e
Gender:			
Female	42%	62%	+e 48%
Male	58%	38%	34%
Legislative Appropriation	\$1,000,000	\$7,828,000	+e 683%e
State Allocation Per Student	\$890	\$560	37%e

¹⁶Compiled by the Act 101 Directors' Association with data from John Senier, Office of Post Secondary and Higher Education, PA. Department of Education, May 1996.

tion, i.e., those who cannot afford to attend full-time, either because of personal or financial obligations. Act 101 Programs serve the ever changing higher education population, increasingly older, female, and part-time (see the *Act 101 Program Profile, 1971-1996*, p. 8).

In the 25 years after the signing of Speaker of the House K. Leroy Irvis' vision into law on Thursday, August 31, 1971, Act 101 has proved to be the paradigm for which all present and future educational opportunity programs should be modeled. Act 101 Works! and the over 22,000 graduates who are working and contributing economically, culturally and socially to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and to the nation at large are living testaments to the Pennsylvania Higher Education Equal Opportunity Act - Act 101 of 1971.