

MINUTES

WEST VIRGINIA HIGHER EDUCATION POLICY COMMISSION

April 30, 2021

I. Call to Order

Chairman Michael J. Farrell convened a meeting of the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission on April 30, 2021, at 9:00 a.m., by Zoom videoconference and conference call. The following Commission members participated: Robert L. Brown, Ex-Officio; Clayton Burch, Ex-Officio; James W. Dailey; Michael J. Farrell; Diane Lewis Jackson; Dale Lowther; and Andrew A. Payne. Absent was Commissioner Donna L. Schulte. Other participants included state college and university representatives, Chancellor Sarah Armstrong Tucker, and Commission staff.

Chairman Farrell secured a quorum and welcomed all participants to the meeting.

II. Chairman's Report

A. Formation of Nominating Committee

Chairman Farrell announced the formation of a Nominating Committee to elect the Higher Education Policy Commission officers for 2022. The following Commissioners have been selected to serve on the Committee: Robert Brown, Clayton Burch and Dale Lowther.

B. 2022 Meeting Dates

Chairman Farrell presented the following schedule of Commission meetings for 2022: April 8, June 10, October 7, and December 16.

Chairman Farrell read a resolution honoring Dr. Corley Dennison, who is retiring as Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, for his many years of exemplary service to the State of West Virginia and the higher education community. Commissioner Dailey moved approval of the resolution; Commissioner Lowther seconded the motion. Motion passed.

Chairman Farrell led a discussion regarding the renewal of Chancellor Tucker's contract. Commissioners stated that they are highly impressed with Chancellor Tucker's performance and her advocacy of higher education, and praised her ability to connect with constituent groups, state government leaders, the Legislature, institutional presidents, and a diverse community of individuals.

III. Chancellor's Report

Chancellor Sarah Armstrong Tucker began her report by commenting on the many attributes of retiring Vice Chancellor Corley Dennison, stating that his deep knowledge of education will be missed but that fortunately he will remain with the system as a consultant for academic affairs until his position is filled.

Chancellor Tucker continued by sharing that after a difficult year, we have a reason to celebrate as all institutions are holding in-person spring commencement ceremonies. She spoke of how remarkable the newly graduates are that even amid the uncertainty of a global pandemic persisted in finishing their studies. She also praised the commitment of faculty and staff who supported them in this incredibly challenging time.

Chancellor Tucker concluded her remarks by reporting the Commission's financial aid team has started sending out Promise Scholarship award letters to approximately 2,000 high school students, and that this number will increase as more students apply and qualify for the scholarship. She added that financial aid outreach efforts include sending letters to all high school seniors, holding meetings with superintendents and counselors, advertising through digital marketing such as video posting on TikTok and other popular sources, conducting webinars, and holding a giveaway contest.

IV. Updates from Constituent Groups

A. Advisory Council of Classified Employees

Ms. Jenna Derrico, Chair of the Advisory Council of Classified Employees and an employee at West Virginia Northern Community and Technical College, reported on behalf of classified employees. Ms. Derrico's presentation included the importance of conducting the external market study; the need to hold regular meetings of the Job Classification Committee, and the formation of the Compensation Planning and Review Committee as stated in the West Virginia Code, to complement the work of the Job Classification Committee, and how the budget liability introduced with the cutting of the state income tax will affect higher education in the future. Ms. Derrico urged the Commission to support classified staff and make sure institutions are following classification and compensation guidelines.

Chairman Farrell asked that a representative from the Higher Education Policy Commission attend the Council meetings.

B. Advisory Council of Faculty

Dr. Joseph Allen, Chair of the Advisory Council of Faculty and professor at Concord University, reported on behalf of faculty. Dr. Allen's presentation included the mission of the Advisory Council of Faculty as stated in West Virginia Code; the Council's 2020-21 initiatives, the need to improve broadband, address instruction technology through funding and trainings, improve mental health resources for

campuses statewide, and provide transparency in campus governance such as staff and faculty evaluations of boards of governors and administrators at the dean level or higher. Dr. Allen encouraged the Commission to support globalization initiatives which benefit domestic West Virginia students through increased intercultural competence of study abroad opportunities which are synergistic with international recruiting.

Chairman Farrell asked Dr. Allen to update the Commission at its next meeting regarding recruiting efforts of international students.

C. Advisory Council of Students

Ms. Anna Williams, Chair of the Advisory Council of Students and Student Council President at Marshall University, reported on behalf of the students. Ms. Williams presented an update on student activities through the year in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. She mentioned the food drives held to benefit community food pantries, book drives for those incarcerated, and community clean-up. She added that efforts are underway to encourage students and community members to receive the COVID-19 vaccine so that life can return to normal. Ms. Williams stated that Council members were involved in the recent legislative session, particularly with the issue of permitting carrying of guns on campus, and that the Council sent a letter to the Legislature opposing the proposed legislation.

Ms. Williams bade farewell to the Commission as she is graduating this spring. She thanked all who motivate students to attend and complete college, particularly those with difficult backgrounds.

V. Update from Council of Presidents

Dr. Mirta Martin, President of Fairmont State University, reported on behalf of the Council of Presidents. Dr. Martin spoke of the accomplishments of the student body who were able to complete their studies while confronted with the adversities of the COVID-19 pandemic and praised faculty for putting community over self to overcome the challenges of teaching their courses virtually. She added that after a difficult year, all campuses feel pride watching their graduates walk the stage at spring commencement.

Regarding regular campus business, Dr. Martin stated that all institutions complied with COVID-19 directives, followed athletic mandates, and interacted with their legislators during the recent legislative session. She thanked the Council of Presidents for their willingness to collaborate with each other, forming a community of friends during a dark year. She also thanked the Commission, Chancellor Tucker and her staff for their strong support and advocacy before the Legislature, the Governor's Office, and others in state government.

VI. Update on Legislative Session

Mr. Matt Turner, Executive Vice Chancellor for Administration, provided an overview of legislative activity related to higher education. The West Virginia Legislature's regular session concluded on April 10, 2021.

In addition, Vice Chancellor Turner commented on the Commission's effort to recruit international students; the result of the 2020 census and the great work of the student government bodies statewide, which assisted with spreading the word to their constituents about the importance of participating in the census count; and the results of House Bill 2020, the state budget bill signed by the Governor on April 15th.

VII. Update from the Division of Student Affairs

Ms. Elizabeth Manuel, Senior Director of Student Affairs, provided an overview of activities in the Division of Student Affairs. She reported on the Access to College and other outreach initiatives; the NCAN \$50,000 grant award for the FAFSA Completion Campaign; the upcoming 25 Colleges and Universities College Commons Week event; and the GEAR UP grant, which has served over 28,000 students since its inception in 2008. In addition, Ms. Manuel reported that staff has answered thousands of emails requesting information on various topics related to the College Foundation of West Virginia, which her unit oversees.

VIII. Update from the Division of Science and Research

Dr. Juliana Serafin, Senior Director of Science and Research, provided an update about the mission, projects, and grant proposals of the Division. She reported on projects supported by the National Science Foundation(NSF) such as the First2 Network, focused on the retention of rural first generation STEM majors in college; the wrap up of NSF EPSCoR RII Track 1, with the annual report: "Gravity Waves Astrophysics and Appalachian Freshwater Initiative" due in May; and a New Track 1 proposal being submitted in July for a \$20 million 5-year grant entitled "Structural and Functional Connectomics: Innovations in Neuroscience through Advanced Data Science." Additionally, Dr. Serafin reported on state-funded projects such as the Research Challenge Fund which have distributed awards to several state and private college recipients. To end, Dr. Serafin reviewed "Vision 2025: West Virginia Science and Technology Strategic Plan", which is a requirement of West Virginia State Code and the National Science Foundation for EPSCoR funding.

IX. Update from the Division of Health Sciences

Dr. Cynthia Persily, Senior Director of Health Sciences, provided an update about the mission and work of the Division of Health Sciences. She reported that the Division is responsible for management of the following programs: Health Sciences Service, Mental Health Loan Repayment, Choose WV, Medical Student Loan Repayment, and WV Nursing Scholarship. From 2020, there have been 234 scholarships awarded and \$1 million plus in loan repayments. Dr. Persily further reported that the Division

disburses awards for the following grant programs: WV Rural Health Initiative, Rural Residency, Undergraduate Rural Research, Special Projects, and Behavioral Health. From 2020, 18 new grants have been awarded, a total of more than \$2 million.

Regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, Dr. Persily stated that the Division of Health Sciences was charged with the distribution of 56 thousand doses of the vaccine to all public and private colleges and universities, including community and technical colleges, over a 20-week period. Division staff coordinated the development of the WV Vaccine Administration, Collaboration and Support Team (WV-VACS) of health sciences students providing vaccine support statewide. In addition, it coordinated return-to-campus guidance, return-to-campus universal screening, and 10 percent random surveillance for all institutions along with the Joint Interagency Task Force.

Campus presidents praised Dr. Persily and her staff for their extraordinary efforts and assistance in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

X. Approval of Minutes

Commissioner Lewis Jackson moved to approve the minutes of the meetings held on November 20 and December 14, 2020 and March 11 and March 29, 2021. Commissioner Dailey seconded the motion. Motion passed.

XI. Approval of Revisions to Series 59, Procedural Rule, Awarding Undergraduate College Credit for Prior Learning, Advanced Placement Credit, and College-Level Examination Program

Dr. Cynthia Persily, Senior Director of Health Sciences, provided an overview of the proposed revisions to Series 59.

Commissioner Dailey moved approval of the following resolution:

Resolved, That the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission approves revisions to Series 59, Procedural Rule, Awarding Undergraduate College Credit for Prior Learning, Advanced Placement Credit, and College-Level Examination Program to be filed with the Secretary of State for the 30-day public comment period and, if no substantive comments are received, that the Commission extends its final approval.

Commissioner Lewis Jackson seconded the motion. Motion passed.

XII. Approval of Institution Capital Assessments for Fiscal Year 2022

Dr. Edward Magee, Vice Chancellor of Finance, provided an overview of the proposed fiscal year 2022 institution capital assessments.

Commissioner Payne moved approval of the following resolution:

Resolved, That the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission approves the institution capital assessments for Fiscal Year 2022.

Commissioner Lowther seconded the motion. Motion passed.

XIII. Approval of Financing for Energy Savings Projects and Related Financing

Vice Chancellor Magee provided an overview of the proposed financing for energy savings projects and related financing as requested by West Liberty University.

Commissioner Dailey moved approval of the following resolution:

Resolved, That the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission approves the issuance of West Liberty University's Lease Purchase Obligations, Series 2021 and the capital improvements generating energy savings financed by this debt.

Commissioner Lowther seconded the motion. Motion passed.

XIV. Approval of Extension of the West Virginia Higher Education Grant Application Deadline

Mr. Brian Weingart, Senior Director of Financial Aid, provided an overview of the proposed deadline extension for the West Virginia Higher Education Grant application.

Commissioner Payne moved approval of the following resolution:

Resolved, That the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission approves the extension of the West Virginia Higher Education Grant application deadline to July 1, 2021.

Commissioner Lewis Jackson seconded the motion. Motion passed.

XV. Degree Pursuant Coursework Appeal for Financial Aid Eligibility

Mr. Weingart reported that the U.S. Department of Education has issued guidance stating that the Higher Education Act of 1965 requires federal financial aid to only pay for courses required for a student's degree program. Students are being impacted by this because of the number of college credits they have earned while in high school. In some cases, students as early as the sophomore year, do not have enough courses they can take toward their degree program to be full-time. Several state financial aid programs such as the Promise Scholarship, West Virginia Higher Education Grant, Underwood-Smith Teaching Scholars Program, and the Engineering Science and Technology Scholarship require students to be enrolled full-time. Mr. Weingart stated that the intention of the new policy, as recommended by the Higher Education Student Financial Aid Advisory Board, is to ensure that state aid recipients are not forced to

take or pay for courses not required for their degree program when they have been able to accelerate through their program of study. He added that when a student cannot meet full-time enrollment status within a term due to unavailability of required courses, that student would submit an appeal to the Commission.

XVI. Presentation of the College-Going Rate of 2020 West Virginia Public High School Graduates

Dr. Christopher Treadway, Senior Director of Research and Policy, reported that the Division of Policy and Planning compiles data on the college-going patterns of recent West Virginia high school graduates in order to calculate the annual college-going rate. He stated that utilization of the new P-20 data system to calculate the college-going rate allows the ability to disaggregate data based on certain student demographic and academic indicators such as race or ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, and a student's history of enrolling in college-level coursework while in high school. Educators may use these disaggregated data to identify student populations that might benefit from additional support preparing for college or navigating the college-going process.

Dr. Treadway further reported that statewide, graduates who enrolled in both advanced placement and dual credit college-level coursework while in high school had a college-going rate of 87.2 percent, while those taking only one mode of college-level coursework had college-going rates ranging from 66.2 to 70.1 percent. Meanwhile, graduates taking no college-level courses in high school had a considerably lower college-going rate of only 25.3 percent. Further, high school graduates with a higher socio-economic status in their senior year attended college at a rate of 58.8 percent, while those identified as low in their senior year attended college at a much lower rate of 33.8 percent. He highlighted college-going rates in West Virginia's high schools by graduation year, and other pertinent trends.

XVII. Report on Program Review

Ms. Nikki Bryant, Director of Academic Programing, reported that in accordance with W. Va. Code §18B-1B-4 and §18B-2A-4 and Series 10, Procedural Rule, Program Review, the institutions through their respective governing boards conducted academic program reviews during the 2019-2020 academic year and submitted summary reports that indicate actions taken. She explained that the institutions reviewed a total of 110 programs and as a result 104 programs were recommended for continuation, four programs were recommended for continuation with corrective action, and the following two programs were recommended for discontinuation: Bachelor of Science in Cytotechnology at Marshall University, and the Bachelor of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies at West Virginia University. Further, Ms. Bryant highlighted program enrollments and graduates for each institution.

XVIII. Approval of Chancellor's Contract

Chairman Farrell entertained a motion to approve the Chancellor's contract.

Commissioner Payne moved approval of the following resolution:

Resolved, That the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission approves Dr. Sarah Armstrong Tucker's contract as Chancellor for a three-year term beginning July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2024.

Commissioner Dailey seconded the motion. Motion passed.

XIX. Additional Board Action and Comments

There were no additional board action items or comments.

XX. Adjournment

There being no further business, Commissioner Lewis Jackson moved to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Dailey seconded the motion. Motion passed.


Michael J. Farrell, Chairman


Diana Lewis Jackson, Secretary