

DRAFT MINUTES

WEST VIRGINIA HIGHER EDUCATION POLICY COMMISSION

November 20, 2021

I. Call to Order

Chairman Michael J. Farrell convened a meeting of the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission on November 20, 2020, 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

Chairman Farrell presented a resolution honoring retiring Vice Chancellor of Health Sciences, Robert B. Walker, M.D., for his many years of exemplary service to the State of West Virginia and its higher education community. Commissioner Payne moved approval of the resolution; Commissioner Dailey seconded the motion. Motion passed.

Chairman Farrell proceeded to speak of the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic continues to have on students such as food insecurity; lack of broadband availability, affecting K-12 and college students as both are relying on virtual education; low participation in the number of applications for the PROMISE Scholarship, which is of great concern as the Legislature approved the scholarship to improve college attendance and retention of West Virginia students, among others. Mr. Farrell stated that, we as a community, need to find solutions to these problems. He urged the Chancellor and Vice Chancellor to continue communicating to the Legislature that it is essential that we do more for our students.

III. Chancellor's Report

Chancellor Sarah Armstrong Tucker reported that today, November 20, 2020, is the last day of in-person classes for the state's colleges and universities, which then will be transitioning to virtual learning for the remainder of the semester to avoid further spread of the COVID-19 virus around the holidays. She commended the presidents for their hard work to keep their campuses safe and stated that as a result, less than 1 percent of students, faculty and staff have tested positive for the virus. Chancellor Tucker expressed concern about the decline in enrollment at most campuses, particularly among dual-enrollment, out-of-state and international students. She added that applications to the PROMISE Scholarship Program have dropped as well and

mentioned the probable causes for the decreases. To improve college participation, she explained that the Commission is launching a digital communication marketing campaign in December and working with its partners to spread the message to students and their families that they cannot lose sight of their future, that the pandemic will be behind one day, and they must stay on track for college right now.

Regarding recent work by Commission staff, Chancellor Tucker highlighted the annual College Application and Exploration Week, an event organized by the Division of Student Affairs to discuss college options with students. She proudly stated that it was a success with nearly 400 elementary, middle and high schools, adult education classes, community groups and home-schooling groups participating.

IV. Updates from Constituent Groups

A. Advisory Council of Classified Employees

Ms. Jenna Derrico, Chair of the Advisory Council of Employees and employee at West Virginia Northern Community and Technical College, reported on behalf of classified employees. Ms. Derrico stated that the Council is working on preparing for the next legislative session. Issues of concern to staff include how the legislative super-majority recently elected may affect higher education; if legislation proposed in years past will be revisited; if campuses will be allowed carry-out choice without legislative interference; finding a permanent solution for PEIA funding; and better broadband accessibility throughout the state, among others. Ms. Derrico stated that the Council is worried with the possibility of employee furlough and if they will have in-put about its implementation. She asked that the Commission issue guidelines regarding what it is to be a classified and non-classified employee, with the latter not being written in the State's Code.

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 stated that the Council is developing a plan that supports faculty for the upcoming legislative session. He further stated that broadband access continues to be a problem at the campuses and that classes need to be smaller-in size to enable the delivery of hybrid-teaching caused by the pandemic. He explained that teaching a class in-person and virtually resembles teaching several classes at the same time. Dr. Allen added that due to safety protocols in place, West Virginia colleges have averted large numbers of COVID-19 cases in their campuses.

C. Advisory Council of Students

Ms. Anna Williams, Chair of the Advisory Council of Students and Student Body President at Marshall University, reported on behalf of the students. She stated that

food insecurity continues to affect students particularly those who have lost their employment or are working less hours due to the pandemic. She explained that many colleges are working with food pantries and other community organizations to provide food to all students in need. Ms. Williams further stated that Internet access is a problem for a lot of students, particularly now that classes will be offered virtually. Also of great concern is the rise in students experiencing mental health struggles exacerbated by the pandemic, with many reporting that anxiety and stress levels are causing them difficulty in concentrating. Ms. Williams added that campus counselors are dealing not only with the students' mental health but also their financial needs and mentioned the need to increase their number to assist with these issues. She noted that, sadly, students are losing their college experience due to the pandemic.

V. Update from Council of Presidents

Dr. Stephen Greiner, President of West Liberty University, reported on behalf of the Council of Presidents. Dr. Greiner stated that the institutions have designed and implemented guidelines for campus and surveillance testing to control the spread of the COVID-19 virus. He added that the presidents are working to address food insecurity and mental issues affecting their students. He conveyed the presidents' gratitude to Chancellor Tucker, Dr. Cynthia Persily and others in the Commission who advocate for their institutions before the Governor and are instrumental in securing the services of the National Guard and the Department of Health and Human Resources.

VI. Approval of Minutes

Commissioner Dailey moved to approve the minutes of the Higher Education Policy Commission meetings held on September 18 and October 19, 2020. Commissioner Lewis Jackson seconded the motion. Motion passed.

VII. Presentation of Fiscal Year 2020 Consolidated Audit

Dr. Edward Magee, Vice Chancellor of Finance, provided an overview of the Fiscal Year 2020 consolidated audit. He invited Michael Johns of the firm Clifton Larson Allen LLP, which conducted the audit, to offer comments. Afterward, Commissioner Jackson Lewis asked if any changes were anticipated in the colleges' bond ratings. Dr. Magee explained that it will depend on what the spring semester looks like. He added that West Virginia State University is looking to do refinancing.

Commissioner Payne moved approval of the following resolution:

Resolved, That the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission accepts the audited financial report for the Higher Education Fund for the Fiscal Year ending June 30, 2020.

Commissioner Dailey seconded the motion. Motion passed.

VIII. Approval of Fiscal Year 2022 Capital Project Priorities

Dr. Magee provided an overview of the proposed Fiscal Year 2022 capital project priorities.

Commissioner Payne moved approval of the following resolution:

Resolved, That the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission approves the prioritized capital project list for Fiscal Year 2022 and directs staff to report the capital project priorities to the Legislative Oversight Commission on Education Accountability in January as statutorily required.

Commissioner Lewis Jackson seconded the motion. Motion passed.

IX. Report on Fall 2020 Enrollment

Dr. Chris Treadway, Senior Director of Research and Policy, provided a detailed analysis of current enrollment data derived from the Fall Census 2020 data collection along with historical enrollment trends. Data elements considered included the College-Going Rate, Fall to Fall Retention Rates, Headcount Enrollment, and FTE Enrollment.

X. Presentation of 2020 Financial Aid Comprehensive Report

Mr. Brian Weingart, Senior Director of Financial Aid, provided a detailed overview of the 2020 Financial Aid Comprehensive Report which included descriptions of and changes to West Virginia financial aid programs; policy recommendations for West Virginia financial aid programs; and longitudinal data about recipients of state financial aid, and outcomes of these recipients. The Financial Aid Comprehensive Report along with the Financial Aid section of Explorer, the Commission's higher education data portal, together provide a comprehensive view of the principal sources of financial aid at West Virginia colleges and universities. Data presented were for the 2019-2020 academic year.

Mr. Weingart added that the Financial Aid Comprehensive Report may be accessed at the following link: <http://www.wvhepc.edu/resources/data-and-publication-center/>

XI. Approval of Fiscal Year 2020 Research Trust Fund Annual Report

Dr. Juliana Serafin, Senior Director of Science and Research, provided an overview of the Fiscal Year 2020 Research Trust Fund Annual Report.

Commissioner Lewis Jackson moved approval of the following resolution:

Resolved, That the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission approves the

Fiscal Year 2020 Research Trust Fund Annual Report and recommends submission to the Governor and the Legislature.

Commissioner Lowther seconded the motion. Motion passed.

XII. Vision 2025 Annual Report

Dr. Serafin provided a detailed overview of the Vision 2025 Annual Report. She stated that it was developed in 2015 as the strategic plan to guide the Commission's science and research efforts to achieve the goal: "By 2025, Science, Technology, and Engineering are West Virginia's Leading Economic Growth Drivers Attracting Investments, Creating Jobs, and Improving Our Quality of Life." She added that there are five objectives in the plan: Financial Development; Physical Development; People Development; Cultural Development; and Innovation Economy Development. Each objective has two or three "smart goals," specific, measurable, attainable, results-focused, and time-bound. Because the plan is now over five years old, the Division of Science and Research issued a Request for Proposals on October 16, 2020. A final draft of the new plan will be available on April 1, 2021.

XIII. West Virginia University BA/BS to BSN Program at New Location

Dr. Corley Dennison, Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, provided an overview of West Virginia University's School of Nursing request to offer a Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Science to Bachelor of Science in Nursing fast-track degree program in Bridgeport, West Virginia. Chairman Farrell asked Dr. Dennison to explain the effect of this new program on the nursing degree offered by Fairmont State University.

Commissioner Lowther moved approval of the following resolution:

Resolved, That the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission confirms West Virginia University to offer a BA/BS to BSN program at the United Hospital Center in Bridgeport, WV. This authorization is specifically for the BA/BS to BSN program.

Commissioner Payne seconded the motion. Motion passed.

XIV. Approval of Bachelor of Science in Strategic Leadership

Dr. Dennison provided an overview of the proposed Bachelor of Science in Strategic Leadership as submitted by Fairmont State University. He invited Dr. Timothy Oxley, Interim Dean of the School of Business, to offer comments on the new program.

Commissioner Payne moved approval of the following resolution:

Resolved, That the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission approves the Bachelor of Science in Strategic Leadership at Fairmont State University for

implementation in August 2021. This approval expires two years from the date of Commission approval if the program is not fully implemented.

Commissioner Lowther seconded the motion. Motion passed.

XV. Approval of Series 64, Legislative Rule, Administrative Exemption

Mr. Matthew Turner, Executive Vice Chancellor of Administration, provided an overview of the proposed Series 64, Legislative Rule, Administrative Exemption.

Commissioner Dailey moved approval of the following resolution:

Resolved, That the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission approves the proposed Series 64, Legislative Rule, Administrative Exemption, to be filed with the Secretary of State for the thirty-day public comment period and, if no substantive comments are received, that the Commission extends its final approval.

Commissioner Lowther seconded the motion. Motion passed.

XVI. Confirmation of Presidential Appointment and Approval of Presidential Compensation

This item was removed from the agenda as the approved contract has not been submitted to the Commission.

XVII. Additional Board Action and Comments

There were no additional board action items or comments.

XVIII. Adjournment

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

Michael J. Farrell, Chairman

Diana Lewis Jackson, Secretary