

DRAFT MINUTES

WEST VIRGINIA HIGHER EDUCATION POLICY COMMISSION

April 17, 2020

I. Call to Order

Chairman Michael J. Farrell convened a meeting of the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission on April 17, 2020, at 9:00 a.m., by conference call. The following Commission members participated: Robert L. Brown, Ex-Officio; Clayton Burch, Ex-Officio; Michael J. Farrell; Diane Lewis Jackson; Dale Lowther; Donna L. Schulte, and Andrew A. Payne. Absent was Commissioner James W. Dailey. Others participating included state college and university representatives, Interim 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 commended the higher education community for their efforts to overcome the problems created by COVID-19. He thanked Interim Chancellor Tucker for maintaining communication with members of the Legislature, congressional representatives, and members of the Governor's Office to secure the necessary fiscal funding for higher education to overcome the losses as a result of the virus quarantine. Additionally, Chairman Farrell praised the institutional presidents for their collaboration with each other and staying united during this process. He recommended the reading of an article that recently appeared in The Chronicle of Higher Education which analyzes what campuses should be and could be; and concluded by stating that the Higher Education Policy Commission is positioned to continue its mission.

III. Chancellor's Report

Interim Chancellor Sarah Tucker commented on the very challenging decisions the institutional presidents are having to make related to the COVID-19 crisis; particularly how to offer classes during the upcoming fall semester. From the outbreak of the pandemic and the need to quarantine, the institutions are delivering all classes online. She announced that the Commission has contracted with a firm to develop a survey to gather student and parental opinions on the best approach to offer classes during the upcoming fall semester. She added that U.S. Senators Shelly Moore Capito and Joe Manchin have been very instrumental in procuring financial funds from the U. S. Department of Education for West Virginia's higher education institutions to cope with the pandemic; as of yet, the Department of Education has not issued guidelines as to how to spend the funds.

Interim Chancellor Tucker reported that the mental health of students is of primary importance during the pandemic. The Commission, through its Behavioral Health Programs Division of Health Sciences, will work with the institutions to assist as needed. She mentioned the collaboration of the West Virginia National Guard with the institutions to assist them in several areas related to the pandemic.

Interim Chancellor Tucker reported that the Commission continues to offer webinars covering financial aid programs, and is considering adjustments to the PROMISE Scholarship as a result of delays in testing results for the SAT and ACT, which are required to qualify for the scholarship.

Chancellor Tucker introduced Dr. Cynthia Persily as the new director of the Commission's Division of Health Sciences.

IV. Updates from Constituent Groups

A. Advisory Council of Faculty

Dr. Roy Nutter reported on behalf of the Advisory Council of Faculty. Dr. Nutter stated that faculty members have been meeting with legislative leadership to share the need to support funding for their institutions for the upcoming year and the difficulties faced by faculty and students in planning for the fall semester, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. He also stated that teaching courses online has caused problems for students whose homes do not have good internet reception, and with classes that require use of laboratories as the students do not have the equipment to practice.

Chairman Farrell confirmed the willingness of the Commission to assist the institutions in developing efficient ways to offer online courses. He asked the presidents to share their ideas with Interim Chancellor Tucker so that the programs can be put together.

B. Advisory Council of Students

Mr. Andrew Wallace, Vice Chairman, reported on behalf of the Advisory Council of Students. Mr. Wallace reported on the challenges that COVID-19 has presented to the students including the adjustment to online learning, the inability to obtain on the job experience as required of students in some of the technical fields, and the cancellation of physical graduation ceremonies, among others. Mr. Wallace thanked the Commission's Student Affairs staff for their assistance in creating social media messages for the students broadcasting the need to register for the Census 2020.

V. Update from Council of Presidents

Dr. Mirta Martin, President of Fairmont State University and Chair of the Advisory

Council of Presidents, reported that the presidents have been working together to develop best practices that will help their institutions to better serve their students, faculty and communities. They now have a united voice when contacting the Legislature to share the contributions and needs of their institutions. They discussed the CARES (Corona Virus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security) Act package which Congress approved in March. They are waiting for further guidance from the U. S. Department of Education on how to allocate the funds. Dr. Martin extended the appreciation of the presidents to the Commission, Chancellor Tucker and staff for their support during the pandemic.

VI. Approval of Minutes

Commissioner Schulte moved to approve the minutes of the Commission meetings held on February 7 and March 20, 2020. Commissioner Lewis Jackson seconded the motion. Motion passed.

VII. Approval of Chancellor Search Procedure

Mr. Matthew Turner, Executive Vice Chancellor for Administration, provided an overview of the proposed chancellor search procedure.

Commissioner Lowther moved approval of the following resolution:

Resolved, That the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission approves the Chancellor Search Procedure and authorizes the Chairman to instruct staff to conduct the search.

Commissioner Payne seconded the motion. Motion passed.

VIII. Approval of Amendments to the West Virginia Higher Education Retirement Plan

Ms. Patricia Humphries, Vice Chancellor for Human Resources, provided an overview of the proposed amendments to the West Virginia Higher Education Retirement Plan.

Commissioner Payne moved approval of the following resolution:

Resolved, That the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission approves implementation of the provisions of the CARES Act for the Qualified 401(a), 403(b) and 457(b) Plans of the West Virginia Higher Education Retirement Plan and delegates authority to the Finance Committee to implement other compliant flexibility provisions as may be necessary through expiration of the CARES Act on December 31, 2020.

Commissioner Lewis Jackson seconded the motion. Motion passed.

IX. Approval of Modification to National Testing Requirement for the PROMISE Scholarship

Mr. Brian Weingart, Senior Director of Financial Aid, provided an overview of the proposed modification to the national testing requirement for the PROMISE Scholarship.

Commissioner Schulte moved approval of the following resolution:

Resolved, That the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission approves suspension of requirement that an eligible standardized test score must come from a national test and extension of the testing deadline to qualify for the PROMISE Scholarship.

Commissioner Lowther seconded the motion. Motion passed.

X. 2020 Census Update

Vice Chancellor Turner updated the Commission on the agency's teaming with the institutions to inform their students of the need to register with the census 2020. Mr. Turner noted that due to the disruptions caused by the corona virus and the subsequent need to quarantine, the Commission was unable to distribute the funds awarded by the Benedum Foundation to assist the institutions in the coordination of events to advertise the need for the census registration. He added that the student government organizations have been instrumental in disseminating the census information through the campuses, and the institutions have posted it on their websites. He asked the faculty to continue stressing to their students the need to complete the census questionnaire, and the fact that if they live out-of-state but spend most of their time in their institution, they need to register as residents of West Virginia.

XI. Confirmation of Shepherd University Campus Facilities Master Development Plan

Dr. Edward Magee, Vice Chancellor for Finance and Facilities, provided an overview of the proposed campus facilities master development plan, as submitted by Shepherd University.

Commissioner Payne moved approval of the following resolution:

Resolved, That the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission confirms the updated Shepherd University Campus Facilities Master Development Plan.

Commissioner Schulte seconded the motion. Motion passed.

XII. Approval of Institution Capital Assessments for Fiscal Year 2021

Vice Chancellor Magee provided an overview of the proposed institution capital assessments for Fiscal Year 2021.

Commissioner Burch moved approval of the following resolution:

Resolved, That the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission approves the institution capital assessments for Fiscal Year 2021.

Commissioner Schulte seconded the motion. Motion passed.

XIII. Approval of Conveyance by Deed of Roads within the West Virginia Regional Technology Park to the City of South Charleston

Ms. Kristin Boggs, General Counsel, provided an overview of the proposed conveyance by deed of roads within the West Virginia Regional Technology Park to the City of South Charleston.

Commissioner Lewis Jackson moved approval of the following resolution:

Resolved, That the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission approves execution of the Deed that conveys to the City of South Charleston certain roadways within the West Virginia Regional Technology Park and delegates authority to the Chancellor to approve the final documents and execute the Deed on behalf of the Commission.

Commissioner Lowther seconded the motion. Motion passed.

XIV. Confirmation of Interim President at West Virginia State University

General Counsel Boggs provided an overview of the proposed confirmation of the interim president as submitted by the West Virginia State University Board of Governors.

Commissioner Payne moved approval of the following resolution:

Resolved, that the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission confirms the appointment by the West Virginia State University Board of Governors of Dr. R. Charles Byers as Interim President of West Virginia State University.

Commissioner Schulte seconded the motion. Motion passed.

XV. Approval of Chancellor's Contract

Chairman Farrell explained the particulars regarding the need to extend the Chancellor's contract.

Commissioner Lewis Jackson moved approval of the following resolution:

Resolved, That the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission delegates to the Chairman the authority to enter into a six-month extension of its current contract with Sarah Armstrong Tucker to serve as Interim Chancellor through October 31, 2020 consistent with the terms and conditions communicated to the Commission, and to formalize a salary allocation agreement with the West Virginia Council for Community and Technical College Education.

Commissioner Lowther seconded the motion. Motion passed.

XVI. Additional Board Action and Comments

There were no additional board action items or comments.

XVII. Adjournment

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

Michael J. Farrell, Chairman

Diana Lewis Jackson, Secretary