MINUTES
STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
COUNCIL OF HIGHER EDUCATION

1426 North Third Street, Harrisburg, PA
May 13, 2015

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Larry Wittig at 1:00 p.m.

Attending:

James Agras	Kirk Hallett	Colleen Sheehan
Carol Aichele	Maureen Lally-Green (via phone)	Craig Snider
Jay Badams	Jonathan Peri	Karen Farmer White (via phone)
Nicole Carnicella	Mollie Phillips (via phone)	A. Lee Williams
Sandra Dungee Glenn	Justin Reynolds	Larry Wittig
James Grandon		

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the January 14, 2015 meeting of the Council of Higher Education were approved on an **Agras/Peri** motion.

CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

Mr. Larry Wittig, Chairman of the State Board of Education, introduced Dr. Nicole Carnicella, a new member of the State Board and the Council of Higher Education. Mr. Wittig also introduced Joshita Varshney, the high school student member-elect who will begin a two-year term on the Council of Basic Education in July. Finally, Mr. Wittig welcomed Matthew Stem, the new Acting Deputy Secretary of Elementary and Secondary Education.

REPORT OF THE ACTING DEPUTY SECRETARY HIGHER EDUCATION

Ms. Theresa Barnaby, Director of the Bureau of School Leadership and Teacher Quality, provided the following report:

High School Equivalency Examinations

The Department of Education (PDE) released a solicitation for information about high school equivalency examinations. PDE will review the information received about available assessments and deliberate on whether one of these alternatives could be used either in place of or in addition to the GED currently administered in Pennsylvania for the purposes of earning a high school equivalency credential. Prior concerns were raised about the shift GED made in

2014 to solely computer-based testing, and exploring alternative crediting avenues could allow the Commonwealth to return to providing a paper-based high school equivalency test.

Rural Regional College

The Board of Trustees of the new Rural Regional College has been meeting monthly. Funding issues that were delaying the Board's work were resolved through a memorandum of understanding negotiated between the Board and PDE that allowed the Board to access appropriated resources. At its most recent meeting in April, the Board hired a project executive who will lead work to draft the college plan. The next step for the Board is to meet with stakeholders and start performing the research that is necessary for the college plan.

Sunbury Community College Project

PDE staff attended a meeting with the Susquehanna Valley Community Education Partnership's (SVCEP) Board of Directors in April 2015 to discuss the requirements of a community college application. The partnership has been active since 2008 trying to gather support for a community college in Montour, Northumberland, Snyder, and Union Counties. It currently is working on a partnership with Susquehanna University to commence classes in Sunbury while it begins work on a community college application. SVCEP expects to submit an application for a new community college to the State Board at the earliest by late 2016.

Basic Skills Assessment

A recent state policy change bars preservice education students from entering an undergraduate education program prior to passing the Basic Skills Assessment. The change in policy was based on a concern that students were investing more than three years in a program before discovering whether they could pass a necessary certification exam. Ms. Barnaby said concerns regarding this new policy have been addressed in Departmental guidelines that speak to when formal entry into a teacher education program occurs.

COUNCIL CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

Mr. James Grandon, Chairman of the Council of Higher Education, presented a summary of results of the Council's community college survey and invited discussion among members about the results and next steps for developing a report from the Council. Jonathan Peri suggested that the survey results be digested to identify the issues of greatest significance. Lee Williams stated that survey responses about the need for developmental education and efforts to ensure incoming students are college and career ready struck her. Dr. Williams noted that four-year postsecondary institutions rely on two-year postsecondary institutions to support students who may be overwhelmed in another setting. She said responses regarding the expense of developmental education and how such coursework does not court for credit or toward PHEAA grant funding are issues that warrant further discussion. She also encouraged the Board to review information it considered a few years ago about whether remedial courses can be counterproductive.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Sally Winterton, president of the Pennsylvania Association of Colleges and Teacher Educators (PAC-TE), thanked Ms. Barnaby and her staff for their work regarding the Basic Skills Assessment. Ms. Winterton reported that overall the PAC-TE membership is pleased with where things are going on that issue.

Kevin Zook, Dean of the School of Education at Holy Family University and president-elect of PAC-TE, expressed concern about turning over the assessment of student teachers to third-party for-profit companies such as Pearson and ETS. Mr. Zook noted that, at the past two State Board meetings, he and Ms. Winterton have expressed to the Board PAC-TE's strong opposition to adopting such third-party assessments in Pennsylvania and urged the Board to investigate the situation. Mr. Zook shared a personal anecdote from a student in New York who took Pearson's EdTPA student teacher assessment and failed despite positive evaluations from university supervisors and her cooperating teacher and becoming a finalist for a teaching job. He reflected on his experience as a faculty member in education and said third party student teaching assessments are a professional insult and another piece of evidence that teacher educators are held in disdain and cannot be trusted to appropriately evaluate their students. He then noted that, while his opposition to third-party assessments had been professional, it recently became personal and stated that the student in the anecdote he shared was his daughter. Mr. Zook urged the Board to exercise its oversight authority and take necessary action to prohibit the adoption of third-party student teaching assessments in Pennsylvania.

Dr. Williams asked whether PAC-TE had crafted a replacement to the current student teaching assessment. Mr. Zook replied that PAC-TE is working to solidify and finalize its proposal for an alternative student teacher assessment and is awaiting a request for information from the Department in order to submit its proposed alternative for the Department's consideration.

ACTION ITEMS

There were no action items.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no announcements

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further items of business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:00 p.m.

Karen Molchanow /sf

Karen Molchanow
Executive Director