

**MINUTES
STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
COUNCIL OF HIGHER EDUCATION**

**333 Market Street, Honors Suite, Harrisburg, PA
September 13, 2017**

The meeting of the Council of Higher Education was called to order by James Agras at 11:21 a.m.

Attending:

James Agras
Andrew Ahr
Carol Aichele
Nicole Carnicella
Ellie DeWitt

Sandra Dungee Glenn
Alex Fey
Pamela Gunter-Smith
Kirk Hallett
Shirlann Harmon

Maureen Lally-Green (*via phone*)
Jonathan Peri
A. Lee Williams
Larry Wittig

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the July 12, 2017, meeting of the Council of Higher Education were approved on a **Peri/Dungee-Glenn** motion.

**COMMITTEE REPORT
SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON THE ERIE COUNTY
COMMUNITY COLLEGE PLAN**

Dr. Lee Williams, Committee Chair, reported on the Committee's inaugural meeting which was held earlier in the day. She said the Committee reviewed its role and purpose related to Erie County's application to establish a new community college and that members shared preliminary thoughts on areas of the plan that they may want to follow-up on with a request for supplementary information from the applicant. Dr. Williams also reported that the Committee unanimously agreed that it was important to provide an opportunity for input on the plan from members of the local community and, to provide for that, determined to hold a public hearing in Erie on October 10, 2017. Finally, Dr. Williams reported that the Committee took action to initiate consultation with the Governor's Office on the number of community colleges that can be approved for participation in the next fiscal year per Section 1902-A of the Public School Code.

**REPORT OF THE OFFICE OF
POSTSECONDARY AND HIGHER EDUCATION**

Julie Kane, Higher Education Associate with the Department of Education, provided a report on behalf of the Office of Postsecondary and Higher Education.

Ms. Kane reported that a total of 4,394 Commonwealth Secondary School Diplomas were awarded since January 2017. Of those, 3,664 were awarded to GED completers; 362 to HiSet completers; and 368 to eligible students under the 30 College Credit option. In response to a question from James Agras, Ms. Kane clarified that the GED is now solely computer-based and the HiSET has a paper-based option. Ms. Kane also reported that the Division of Adult Education awarded 15 Family Literacy Grants totaling approximately \$3.2 million. She added that the Division is working with the Department of Labor and Industry to review workforce development plans for the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Grant Competition.

Ms. Kane next provided updates on the Higher Education, Early Child Care and Community-Based Partnership Grant and the Troops to Teachers Grant Program. Ms. Kane then discussed the Harry W. Colmery Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2017, also known as the Forever GI Bill.

Ms. Kane then presented updated data on Pennsylvania's postsecondary landscape. She reviewed the number of each type of institution in the commonwealth, as well as current postsecondary attainment rates compared to the attainment rates necessary to meet projected workforce needs in 2025. Ms. Kane then presented maps displaying postsecondary attainment rates and postsecondary enrollments by county. She also shared data that shows that 62% of Pennsylvania students enroll in college within the first year after high school, 48% of high school graduates enrolled in college attend 4-year institutions, and 51% of high school graduates who enroll in college stay in Pennsylvania.

Nicole Carnicella asked if it is difficult to track whether postsecondary students stay and work in Pennsylvania after graduation. Ms. Kane confirmed that is so. Sandra Dungee-Glenn asked if the data presented by Ms. Kane could be broken down into subgroups. Ms. Kane replied that the data can be shared in that disaggregated format.

Ms. Kane presented additional data that showed that 41% of Pennsylvania high school graduates who enroll in college earn a postsecondary credential (associates degree or higher) within 6 years. Pamela Gunter-Smith said the data presented a limited and non-specific picture. Ms. Kane noted that the data is beginning to be provided in a more disaggregated and detailed format. In response to a question from Dr. Williams, Ms. Kane clarified that the data was specific to a graduating cohort.

Ms. Kane concluded her presentation by sharing data on postsecondary retention. Jonathan Peri requested a future presentation with a further breakdown of the data presented by Ms. Kane. Dr. Carnicella proposed raising more awareness regarding 2-year degrees. Ms. Kane then spoke to the issue of reverse transfer and its potential benefit to increase attainment of 2-year degrees among students with some college, but no degree, who may be close to the completion of an associate degree.

Andrew Ahr asked if Ms. Kane had data on credit attainment at the point of drop-out. Ms. Kane cited research that shows students with few credits remaining before graduation often drop-out for financial reasons. Mr. Wittig added that Penn State University may have relevant statistics, and that many institutions seek to have exit interviews with drop-out students. Mr.

Wittig also referenced software, such as Starfish, that can serve as early warning systems to identify potential drop-outs.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Joseph Nairn, president of the Rural Regional College of Northern Pennsylvania (RRC), introduced himself and the college, which was approved on May 25, 2017. Mr. Nairn announced that the college is amid its soft opening with 64 students enrolled in 17 different locations across the 9 counties the college serves. He said the RRC is community college-like, but not is not a community college legislatively because it does not have an individual county sponsor. Mr. Nairn identified the college's service area as encompassing Erie, Crawford, Forest, Warren, Venango, Potter, McKean, Elk, and Cameron counties. He stated that the college is seeking to address much of what has been presented to the Board: meeting workforce needs and two-year programs that will transfer to four-year institutions. Mr. Nairn said the RRC currently is operating in partnership with Gannon University to offer two degrees: a transfer program in multidisciplinary studies that he described as, essentially, a traditional associate's degree and an associate's degree in Business Administration. He also noted that the college is in discussions with Penn College of Technology regarding a partnership for workforce and technical offerings.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mr. Ahr announced that the student body presidents of the University of Pittsburgh, Lincoln University, Temple University, and Penn State University asked him to address the Board on the status of state for Pennsylvania's state-related institutions. He acknowledged the Board's limited capacity to act on the issue. Mr. Ahr stated that two months ago the call to fund these universities, and the long-standing tradition of investing in state-related institutions, garnered overwhelming bi-partisan support when the state spending plan was passed. However, Mr. Ahr said members of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives have yet to act on standalone appropriation bills that fund these universities. Mr. Ahr further stated that these bills would provide funding on par with the state's fiscal commitments in 1998, without adjustment for inflation, and said they are essential for enabling the institutions to continue offering Pennsylvania students top-quality public education at a deep discount. Mr. Ahr said that without approval of these funds, the state-related universities will face a combined deficit of at least \$400 million and that the lack of state appropriations will damage the universities' infrastructures as a whole. He also said the lack of appropriations will asymmetrically affect students who rely on PHEAA grants to make their education financially feasible. Mr. Ahr asserted that to invest in the institutions is to invest in the students the Board ultimately represents, and thanked the Board for its attention.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further items of business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:22 p.m.



Karen Molchanow