

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

Virtual Meeting

March 10, 2021

The meeting of the Council of Higher Education was called to order by Council Chair Dr. Jonathan Peri at 1:18 p.m.

Attending:

James Agras	Anne Griffin	Eva Rankin
Hon. Carol Aichele	Pamela Gunter-Smith	Hon. Curt Sonney
Nathan Barrett	Jeffrey Keeling	Taiba Sultana
Jamie Bracey-Green	Hon. Maureen Lally-Green	Karen Farmer White
Nicole Carnicella	Hon. Mark Longiatti	Lee Williams
Sandra Dungee Glenn	Jonathan Peri	Hon. Lindsey Williams

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Immediately preceding the meeting of the Council of Higher Education, Chair Karen Farmer White called to order the Committee of the Whole and welcomed Senators Scott Martin and Lindsey Williams, Majority and Minority Leaders from the Senate Education Committee, as the newest members of the State Board of Education. Senator Martin will be seated on the Council of Basic Education and Senator Williams will be seated on the Council of Higher Education. Chair Farmer White also announced that Dr. James Baker submitted his resignation from the Board last month. She reported that Governor Wolf has appointed Dr. Lee Williams to replace him as Chair of the Council of Basic Education.

REPORT OF THE ACTING SECRETARY OF EDUCATION

Acting Secretary Noe Ortega delivered remarks to the Committee of the Whole and began by welcoming the newest legislative members of the Board and congratulating Dr. Williams on her appointment as Chair of the Council of Basic Education.

Mr. Ortega said that this week one year ago was a pivotal one during which schools changed core operations and functions and moved from in-person to remote instruction. He reported that Governor Wolf and the COVID-19 Vaccine Task Force just announced a special initiative to vaccinate members of the education community in preparation for returning back to in-person instruction. Coupled with that, Mr. Ortega noted that the department is focused on identifying services and resources to support the education community in addressing learning loss as we move forward. He also spoke to the need to create the most optimal conditions for safe learning for students as we move closer to more normal operations.

Sandra Dungee Glenn inquired about a recent communication from the U.S. Department of Education indicating that states must move forward with state assessments. Ms. Dungee Glenn

asked what the federal government expects to learn from the assessments and how they expect states and school districts to use those assessments. Mr. Ortega said both federal and state leaders have been fielding questions on they will measure the impact of disruptions to student learning during the pandemic. As such, Mr. Ortega said the federal government felt it was necessary to move forward with state assessments. Mr. Ortega to Ms. Dungee Glenn that Matt Stem, Deputy Secretary for Elementary and Secondary Education, will provide additional detail regarding plans for state assessments during his report later in the meeting.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the January 13, 2021, meeting of the Council of Higher Education were approved on a **Gunter-Smith/Dungee Glenn** motion.

REPORT OF THE ACTING DEPUTY SECRETARY AND COMMISSIONER FOR POSTSECONDARY AND HIGHER EDUCATION

Dr. Tanya I. Garcia provided updates to the Board on the following topics: vaccine eligibility, Governor's Emergency Education Relief Fund II, Erie County Community College, Chapter 49 (Certification of Professional Personnel), and the Master Plan for Higher Education.

Dr. Jamie Bracey Green asked how state-owned universities that were awarded \$5 million through the Governor's Emergency Education Relief (GEER) Fund will use the funds. Dr. Garcia responded that there are specific rules regarding how those institutions will be able to utilize the funds and how the funds are used within those rules is at the discretion of the PASSHE system office. Dr. Garcia said the institutions will be required to report to the Department how the funds were spent. She further noted that community colleges that receive GEER fund will be held to the same requirements. Dr. Bracey Green then inquired about whether the new Erie County Community College will benefit from the GEER funds for community colleges. Dr. Garcia said Erie will not be eligible to receive GEER funds because the federal rules established for receiving that money are based on prior budget allocations.

Anne Griffin, the Board's senior high school student member, asked whether there are measure being taken to ease either the curriculum or standards that are normally expected as educators have not be able to teach to their usual level of rigor resulting in education gaps experienced by students during the pandemic. Mr. Stem stated that the department recognizes that students are not going to be able to demonstrate their abilities as they have done in prior years. He noted that the standards are not changing as they are established in regulation.

DISCUSSION ITEM **MASTER PLAN FOR HIGHER EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

Dr. Jonathan Peri summarized discussion that occurred during the last Council meeting in January regarding updating the Master Plan for Higher Education. He then addressed the immediate next action identified during that prior discussion – identifying and inviting stakeholders to participate on a Master Plan for Higher Education Advisory Committee. Dr. Peri recommended that the following 10 individuals be appointed to the Advisory Committee: Dr. Brenda Allen, Lincoln University (HBCU representative); Elizabeth Bolden, Pennsylvania Commission for Community Colleges; Sharif El-Mekki, Center for Black Educator

Development; Dr. Thomas Foley, Association of Independent Colleges and Universities of Pennsylvania; Dr. Patrick Gallagher, University of Pittsburgh (state-related university representative); Dr. Tanya I. Garcia, PA Department of Education; Dr. Daniel Greenstein, Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education; Sheila Ireland, Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry; Pedro Rivera, Thaddeus Stevens Institute of Technology; and Aaron Shenck, Mid-Atlantic Association of Career Schools.

Maureen Lally-Green asked if there would be dialogue between others in the higher education sector in development of the Master Plan. She commented that it would be helpful for the Advisory Committee to hear from those on the ground. Dr. Peri stated that other individuals and organizations will service as a resource through another level of stakeholder engagement.

The Honorable Lindsey Williams asked if student voices will be included in discussions on the Master Plan. Karen Molchanow, the Board's Executive Director, stated that two postsecondary students serve as advisory members of the Board and that they are intended to connect with other students across the Commonwealth and serve as a representative voice in the Council's deliberations.

Dr. Bracey Green and Ms. Dungee Glenn requested that the Advisory Committee be expanded to include direct representation from workforce development to better understand the needs of industry related to postsecondary education. In response, Dr. Peri suggested adding an institutional researcher who is closely connected to industry and could provide relevant data. The Council agreed to explore identifying another individual to add to the Advisory Committee and considering a candidate from the workforce development perspective at the Council's next meeting in May.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no public comments.

ACTION ITEM

MASTER PLAN FOR HIGHER EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

A motion to approve the appointment of a Master Plan for Higher Education Advisory Committee was approved on a **Gunter-Smith/Bracey-Green** motion to include the following individuals as Advisory Committee members, along with an additional member to be named at a later date: Dr. Brenda Allen, Lincoln University (HBCU representative); Elizabeth Bolden, Pennsylvania Commission for Community Colleges; Sharif El-Mekki, Center for Black Educator Development; Dr. Thomas Foley, Association of Independent Colleges and Universities of Pennsylvania; Dr. Patrick Gallagher, University of Pittsburgh (state-related university representative); Dr. Tanya I. Garcia, PA Department of Education; Dr. Daniel Greenstein, Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education; Sheila Ireland, Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry; Pedro Rivera, Thaddeus Stevens Institute of Technology; and Aaron Shenck, Mid-Atlantic Association of Career Schools.

VOTE: All were in favor as indicated by unanimous voice vote.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no announcements.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further items of business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:58 p.m. on an **Agras/Bracey-Green** motion.



Karen Molchanow
Executive Director