

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

333 Market Street, Honors Suite, Harrisburg, PA
November 18, 2015

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Larry Wittig at 1:03 p.m.

Attending:

James Agras	James Grandon	Colleen Sheehan
Carol Aichele	Kirk Hallett	Craig Snider (via phone)
Jay Badams (via phone)	Maureen Lally-Green (via phone)	Lavinia Soliman
James Barker	Jonathan Peri	Joshita Varshney
Nicole Carnicella	Mollie Phillips (via phone)	Larry Wittig

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the September 16, 2015 meeting of the Council of Higher Education were approved on an **Agras/Peri** motion.

**REPORT OF THE ACTING DEPUTY SECRETARY
HIGHER EDUCATION**

Dr. Wil Del Pilar, Acting Deputy Secretary for Postsecondary and Higher Education, provided the following report:

High School Equivalency: GED Grandfathering

The Department of Education (PDE) evaluated 7,741 unique individuals to determine whether they were eligible to benefit from grandfathering of scores from the old GED exam in order to earn a high school equivalency credential. Of those unique individuals, 4,265 have at least one score eligible, 209 already received a diploma as a result of grandfathering, and 3,461 either have no record in the Department's system or do not have any eligible scores. The grandfathering of GED scores will end in December 2015.

High School Equivalency: New Assessments

PDE has completed its review of documentation from potential providers of new high school equivalency assessments. The Department anticipates completing contract negotiations with successful vendors in December and bringing forth recommendations on two tests in January.

Pennsylvania College Application Campaign

Throughout November 2015, PDE will host the second annual Pennsylvania College Application Campaign (PCAC) as part of a national effort to increase the number of first-generation students and students from low-income families pursuing a college degree or other higher education credential. In 2014, 11 Pennsylvania high schools participated in the PCAC, with 640 seniors submitting 926 college applications. For 2015, there are 27 participating high schools.

Rural Regional College

PDE has begun reviewing and providing feedback on components of the draft plan for the Rural Regional College.

SARA Legislation

Legislation to permit Pennsylvania to join the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA) has been passed by the State House and is in the Education Committee of the Pennsylvania Senate. SARA is a nationwide initiative to coordinate the complex state authorization requirements for postsecondary distance education providers.

Relay Graduate School of Education

The Relay Graduate School of Education successfully passed PDE's approval process to operate in Philadelphia and offer a Master of Arts in Teaching. Several institutions protested the presence of Relay in the Philadelphia region, and, in response, the Department will convene a hearing on January 25, 2016.

Annual Certification Report

Data from the Department's Annual Certification Report will be shared at the next meeting of the State Board of Education.

PRESENTATIONS

UPDATED REPORT OF THE COLLEGE TEXTBOOK POLICIES ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Dr. Del Pilar presented the first update to the report of the College Textbook Policies Advisory Committee. Per the College Textbook Affordability, Accountability & Accessibility Act of 2010, the Committee must update its report every three years. Dr. Del Pilar highlighted segments of the first update to the report, including data on the national average of student spending on course materials and results of a survey of bookstores at Pennsylvania institutions of higher education and related businesses.

ACT 101 PROGRAM UPDATE

Christine Zuzack, Vice President of State Grants and Special Programs for the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency (PHEAA), appeared before the Board to provide an annual report on Act 101 programs. Ms. Zuzack reported that participation in Act 101 has declined from 75 institutions in 2007 to 33 programs in 2014-15, concurrent with a decline in funding to support the programs that dropped from \$9.3 million in 2007 to \$2.2 million in 2014-15. She explained that the funding is used for support services provided by institutions to educationally or economically disadvantage students, not for awards made directly to students, and said individual institutional awards ranged from \$27,000 to \$192,000 with a median of \$48,640.

Ms. Zuzack reviewed eligibility criteria for participation in Act 101, which include students with a predicted grade point average of 2.0 or less and economically disadvantaged students. James Barker expressed surprise that the poverty guideline for a family of four set at \$23,850 was so low and asked whether the figure was dated. Ms. Zuzack explained that the figure represented a threshold annually established by the federal government. Ms. Zuzack also reviewed eligibility criteria for institutions wishing to offer Act 101 developmental education programs. She noted that the services provided vary among institutions.

In 2014-15, Ms. Zuzack said 3,838 students participated in Act 101, a slight decline from the prior year due to two less institutions participating. Seventy-one percent of those students attended four-year institutions and 29% attended two-year institutions. Ms. Zuzack reported that retention rates for Act 101 program participants exceeded the national average (71% vs. 68%). She also reported that the average GPA for Act 101 participants was a C+/B- in both remedial and college-level coursework, which is meaningful given that the projected GPA for participants is less than a 2.0.

Finally, Ms. Zuzack reported that Act 101 participants received \$81 million in financial aid during 2014-15, 65% of which was grant or scholarship funding. Mr. Barker asked how much debt the students incurred. Ms. Zuzack said the amount of debt would vary based on the type of institution a student attended. She stated that next year, after a full cohort of students graduate under PHEAA's administration of Act 101, she hoped more statistics would be available including graduation rates and loan indebtedness.

Mr. Grandon said it appeared there is a benefit for community colleges to offer Act 101, but it does not appear that many are partaking of the opportunity. He asked Ms. Zuzack to comment on the decline in institutional participation. Ms. Zuzack noted that community colleges already are significant providers of remedial education. She said some four-year institutions that recently dropped participation indicated that they no longer planned to admit students who require remedial coursework and would look for such students to complete those requirements at a community college first. She highlighted a requirement for institutions to provide a 15%-20% match on top of the dollars provided by PHEAA to support Act 101 programs and programs with a small cohort of less than 50 students as potential reasons for a decline in participation, but said she did not have a concrete answer. She also made the Board aware of the Pennsylvania Association of Developmental Educators, which operates programs similar to

Act 101 that do not fall under PHEAA's umbrella. Dr. Del Pilar stated that he was on staff at PDE when administration of Act 101 was still under the Department and said that institutions began to drop out when funding for the program declined and the expense to institutions to maintain services was too great.

DISCUSSION ITEM
WHITE PAPER ON COMMUNITY COLLEGE ISSUES

James Grandon, Council Chairman, presented a draft of the Council's White Paper on community college issues and invited discussion on the document. The White Paper reflected information reported to the Council through a survey of the Commonwealth's 14 community colleges conducted last fall and was prepared for the purpose of raising awareness of issues impacting community colleges. Eleven of the 14 community colleges responded.

Mr. Grandon reviewed the topics covered in the White Paper, including input on how PDE could better assist the institutions outside of budgetary support; actions community colleges are taking to operate more efficiently and to find cost savings through shared partnerships; feedback on how current state funding could be allocated more fairly; the relationship between community colleges and the K-12 sector both in supporting dual enrollment opportunities and in identifying the academic needs of recent high school graduates; supports for GED recipients; and ideas for how PHEAA funding might better support community college students. Mr. Grandon noted that profiles of each institution also were included in the White Paper as previously requested by the Council.

Mr. Grandon said that, upon approval of the White Paper, next steps would be to transmit the paper to the General Assembly as an informational resource and to share a copy of the paper with the community colleges operating in the Commonwealth.

Dr. Del Pilar noted that he reviewed the report and that, as a result, the Department already has initiated conversation with the community colleges about amending PDE's current reporting requirements to reflect some suggestions offered in the report. Dr. Del Pilar said the document also presented other potential actions related to dual enrollment that he would review and consider moving forward.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

ACTION ITEM: ADOPTION OF WHITE PAPER

The Council's White Paper on Community College Issues was adopted on a Grandon/Agras motion.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no announcements

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further items of business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:45 p.m.



Karen Molchanow
Executive Director