

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

333 Market Street, Honors Suite, Harrisburg, PA  
September 16, 2015

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Larry Wittig at 1:05 p.m.

**Attending:**

Jay Badams	Kirk Hallett	Colleen Sheehan (via phone)
James Barker	Maureen Lally-Green (via phone)	Craig Snider (via phone)
Nicole Carnicella	Donald LeCompte	Lavinia Soliman
Sandra Dungee Glenn (via phone)	Jonathan Peri	Joshita Varshney
James Grandon	Mollie Phillips (via phone)	Larry Wittig

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

The minutes of the July 8, 2015 meeting of the Council of Higher Education were approved on a **Peri/Carnicella** motion.

**CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS**

Mr. Larry Wittig, Chairman of the State Board of Education, opened the meeting of the Committee of the Whole by introducing and welcoming Dr. Wil Del Pilar, the new Acting Deputy Secretary for Postsecondary and Higher Education. Mr. Wittig then recognized Mr. James Grandon, Chairman of the Council of Higher Education, who called the Council meeting to order.

**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 has reviewed information for 7,141 unique individuals to evaluate whether they were eligible to benefit from grandfathering of GED scores achieved on the old version of the exam. Of those individuals, 3,994 have at least one score eligible and 179 already have received a diploma as a result of grandfathering; 3,147 either have no record in the Department's system or do not have scores eligible for grandfathering. The grandfathering of GED scores will end in December of 2015.

### **High School Equivalency: Assessments**

In May of 2015, PDE issued a Request for Proposals to consider additional High School Equivalency Exams to meet the requirements of the Commonwealth Secondary School Diploma (CSSD). The Department is in the process of reviewing applications, and anticipates it will add one or two new exams to its list of approved exams. At least one of the new assessment options will be offered in a paper-based format. Alternatives that are under consideration include the Test Assessing Secondary Completion (TASC) and the HiSET.

Kirk Hallett thanked Dr. Del Pilar for considering alternative assessments to address gaps created by reformatting of the GED exam and to meet the needs of students pursuing a CSSD. Dr. Del Pilar noted that the GED passage rate is in fact increasing, but the number of individuals pursuing the test has been decreasing. He suggested that the decrease may be due to several factors, including individuals who are waiting for the introduction of a new paper-based test in lieu of the now solely computer-based GED. In response to an inquiry from Council members, Dr. Del Pilar also confirmed that the GED is administered in both English and Spanish.

### **College Textbook Policies Advisory Committee**

Dr. Del Pilar reported that he expects an updated report from the College Textbook Policies Advisory Committee to be presented at the next meeting of the Council.

### **Rural Regional College**

Dr. Del Pilar provided an update on organization of the new Rural Regional College. The college's Board of Trustees is continuing to establish itself. The Board has engaged one of the state's community education councils to provide clerical support, a local Workforce Investment Board to provide workforce data, and a research firm to assist with research needed for its college plan. The Board also is in the process of selecting a national search firm to identify candidates for the college's first president. Procedurally, Dr. Del Pilar reported that a School Code bill and a Fiscal Code bill that were vetoed in July would have moved statutory language related to the college from the Fiscal Code into the School Code and also would have extended the deadline for submission of the college plan until June 2016.

### **Sunbury Community College**

The Susquehanna Valley Community Education Partnership is gathering letters of support from school districts, county commissioners, candidates for local office and the city of Sunbury in support of opening a new community college in the region. The partnership had been hoping to start offering courses this fall, but was unable to reach resolution to do so.

### **SARA Legislation**

Legislation permitting Pennsylvania to join the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA) was introduced as part of a School Code bill that was vetoed in July. Dr. Del Pilar reported that a bill addressing SARA is being recirculated for introduction as independent

legislation and is expected to be included in final revisions to the School Code. Approval of participation in SARA also will need to include a funding mechanism to enable PDE to fulfill the obligations of membership in SARA.

### **Relay Graduate School of Education**

The Relay Graduate School of Education has applied to operate in Philadelphia and offer a Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT). Relay successfully passed PDE's approval process, and several institutions protested the presence of Relay in the Philadelphia area. The Department will schedule a hearing to further review this matter.

Relay also applied to offer several certification programs through PDE's initial review process. Dr. Del Pilar said the degree- and program-approval processes fall under different regulations and different review processes, and that PDE approved Relay to offer multiple certification areas through this process. There is no protest process for certification program approval, so the outcome of the forthcoming hearing will not affect Relay's operation of certification programs.

### **Implementation of Policy on the Basic Skills Assessment**

Dr. Del Pilar discussed a recent policy change enacted by the General Assembly to require an assessment of basic skills to be completed by teacher preparation candidates prior to entry into a Pennsylvania baccalaureate teacher preparation program. He then reviewed the guidance released by the Department to clarify the requirements of this policy change and the responsibilities of institutions regarding entry of candidates into teacher preparation programs.

### **Update on the Exploration of a New Student Teaching Assessment**

The Bureau of School Leadership and Teacher Quality has placed the implementation of a new student teaching tool on hold. The Bureau is waiting to learn what, if any, changes will be made to the Department's teacher effectiveness system. Its goal is to then match a student assessment tool that prepares candidates for the type of assessment they will undergo as faculty in the Commonwealth's school districts.

### **Annual Certification Report**

Dr. Del Pilar noted that the Department's Annual Certification Report will be presented at the next meeting of the State Board. He said one of the most disappointing findings in the report was that between 25 and 31 percent of the responses from reporting institutions were left blank.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

There was no public comment.

**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 1:20 p.m.



Karen Molchanow  
Executive Director