

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

333 Market Street, Honors Suite, Harrisburg, PA
May 10, 2017

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

Attending:

James Agras (*via phone*)
Andrew Ahr
Carol Aichele
James Barker (*via phone*)
Nathan Barrett
Nicole Carnicella
Sandra Dungee-Glenn
James Grandon

Kirk Hallett
Shirlann Harmon
Maureen Lally-Green
Jonathan Peri (*via phone*)
Joshita Varshney
Karen Farmer White
A. Lee Williams
Larry Wittig

CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

Larry Wittig, Chairman of the State Board of Education, opened the meeting of the Committee of the Whole. Mr. Wittig introduced Donald Fey, the new junior student representative to the Council of Basic Education, whose term begins effective with the Board's July 12 meeting. Mr. Wittig thanked Kirk Hallett for his participation in the high school student finalists' interview process.

Mr. Wittig then announced that Caroline DeWitt, a student at Gettysburg College, was selected as the new junior student representative to the Council of Higher Education. Mr. Wittig said her term also takes effect with the July 12 meeting.

Mr. Wittig announced the conclusion of Joshita Varshney's term as senior student representative to the Council of Basic Education and presented her with a plaque commemorating her service to the Board.

Mr. Wittig then acknowledged the Secretary of Education for his report.

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY OF EDUCATION

Pedro Rivera, Secretary of Education, addressed the Board with the following report.

Secretary Rivera thanked the Board for its feedback on a variety of issues, including the state education budget, graduation requirements, and assessment measures. He also thanked

Sandra Dungee-Glenn for her inquiry regarding STEM and urban agriculture and said the inquired fostered meaningful conversation among Department staff on the topic.

Secretary Rivera reviewed the names of finalists for Pennsylvania's Teacher of the Year. He also reported that he had an opportunity to hear the culminating projects from the 2-year professional development superintendents' academy, and he commended the participants for outside-the-box thinking and placing their students' needs above the comfort level of the educational system.

The Secretary reported that the Department recently launched an Equity and Inclusion Toolkit as a resource to help schools respond to and prevent racially-charged and -biased-related incidents in their communities. He noted that other states have begun to use Pennsylvania's Toolkit as a resource and template to create their own.

Secretary Rivera next announced that Keystone Grants were awarded to 27 Pennsylvania libraries, providing more than \$5.9 million in funding, and spoke to the valuable service public libraries play in local communities.

Mr. Hallett asked the Secretary how changes in the federal administration would impact the Department's plan to implement the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Mr. Rivera replied that the Department has engaged in conversation about changing the conditions under which public schools operate well before ESSA was enacted and that over 3,000 stakeholders have been engaged in developing PDE's recommendations. He noted that this prior work was well-aligned to ESSA and said the Department would stay the course.

Mr. Wittig then acknowledged James Grandon for the meeting of the Council of Higher Education, and Mr. Grandon called the Council meeting to order.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the March 8, 2017, meeting of the Council of Higher Education were approved on a **Dungee Glenn/Carnicella** motion.

REPORT OF THE DEPUTY SECRETARY **HIGHER EDUCATION**

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

Dr. Del Pilar followed up on the statistical data presented in his report at the Council's March 8, 2017, meeting with subgroup data regarding high school graduation rates, postsecondary enrollment and completion rates. He said the data is important to framing strategies to support reaching the state's 60% postsecondary attainment goal.

Dr. Del Pilar noted that the number of students graduating from high school has been declining since 2009 and is expected to continue declining until approximately 2024. He reviewed high school graduation data by race and ethnicity and noted the greatest growth was seen in the Hispanic and Asian student populations. Dr. Del Pilar also noted that the number of

students identified as economically disadvantaged has increased by 31% at the same time that the overall student population has decreased by 14%, which he said presents challenges in students being able to move forward with postsecondary education. He also reviewed data on the number of students with IEPs and noted that the number of students identified as English Language Learners also has increased. Finally, Dr. Del Pilar reviewed data on students participating in dual enrollment.

Dr. Del Pilar then reviewed data comparing high school graduation rates with postsecondary enrollment by student subgroups compared to the statewide average and highlighted disparities in access to postsecondary education for some of the subgroups. Dr. Del Pilar said the data show that students who participate in dual enrollment matriculate to higher education at a significantly higher rate than the statewide average.

The Deputy Secretary also provided data on postsecondary retention rates for student subgroups compared to the statewide average. He noted that the data show a 91% postsecondary retention rate for students who had participated in dual enrollment. Dr. Del Pilar then presented a comparison of 6-year postsecondary graduation rates for each subgroup as they relate to the statewide average.

Mr. Grandon asked about public awareness of data related to postsecondary completion rates and postsecondary credentials related to workforce needs and whether the information is being well-communicated. Dr. Del Pilar replied that the information is new, and that the Department is sharing it when and where opportunities arise. He spoke to factors that affect postsecondary completion and said postsecondary institutions have a responsibility to support students to graduation. He also highlighted initiatives of the Department of Education, including Complete College America, the 15 to Finish Campaign, remediation, and the Reach Higher Initiative. Matthew Stem, Deputy Secretary for Elementary and Secondary Education, then spoke to initiatives his office is pursuing to build greater postsecondary connections.

Ms. Dungee-Glenn thanked Dr. Del Pilar for the subgroup data provided in his report that she had requested during the Council's March 8 meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Wittig advised those wishing to make public comments that they would be limited to three minutes each. Mr. Grandon added that the Board would not furnish comments in reply to public remarks.

Dr. Robert Sklaroff stated that he had provided a handout to all members of the Board. He questioned why the Board did not address the white student problem related to postsecondary enrollment in the data presented by Dr. Del Pilar. He then observed that the Board's directory does not contain email addresses for each member and said the Board may wish to add those. Dr. Sklaroff stated that he has filed complaints with the Department of Education regarding the Abington School District and its superintendent, and that he received no response. He stated that, through public information requests, he sought information related to the lawyers that would potentially have been asked to work with the defendants in the case and said there was no billing which leads him to believe Abington is slow-rolling the complaint and he doesn't like it. Dr. Sklaroff expressed his disfavor with this and demanded a response at some point in the future.

Dr. Sklaroff commented that when he requested information regarding the complaint process, the Open Records Office told him they did not have a complaint form, then stated he had found a complaint form by other means. He also stated that he requested other information regarding other issues and none of it was available to him. He said there are other issues with the Southern Poverty Law Center that show a disconnect with reality, and said this is manifested in correspondence from the social studies chair Flaherty's letter stating she would not honor future records requests and that this is a violation of the Open Records Law. He requested that someone at the Board's level rectify this and said the Board should do it because it presumably has oversight of PDE.

Bob Cormany, Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Association of Pupil Services Administrators, announced his pending retirement and introduced his successor, Dr. Doug Arnold. Mr. Cormany thanked the Board for the attention it has given his comments in the past and expressed his well-wishes. Dr. Arnold stated that he looks forward to working with the Board.

ACTION ITEMS

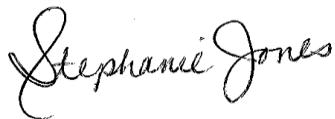
There were no action items.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no announcements.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further items of business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:15 p.m.



Karen Molchanow
Executive Director