

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

**333 Market Street, Honors Suite, Harrisburg, PA
November 8, 2017**

The meeting of the Council of Higher Education was called to order by Council Chairman James Grandon at 1:23 p.m.

Attending:

James Agras (*via phone*)
Andrew Ahr
Carol Aichele
James Barker
Nathan Barrett (*via phone*)
Nicole Carnicella

Ellie DeWitt
Sandra Dungee Glenn
James Grandon
Pamela Gunter-Smith
Shirlann Harmon

Maureen Lally-Green (*via phone*)
Jonathan Peri
Craig Snider (*via phone*)
Karen Farmer White
Larry Wittig

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the September 13, 2017, meeting of the Council of Higher Education were approved on a **Dungee Glenn/Carnicella** motion.

OPENING REMARKS

Larry Wittig, Board Chairman, opened the meeting of the Committee of the Whole with the following of the remarks. Mr. Wittig welcomed and introduced Noe Ortega, the Department of Education's new Acting Deputy Secretary of Postsecondary and Higher Education. He then announced the resignation of Board member Dr. Jay Badams. Dr. Badams recently moved out-of-state to pursue a new position as a school administrator in Vermont and New Hampshire.

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY OF EDUCATION

Secretary Pedro Rivera provided an update on Act 55 of 2017, recent legislation that made amendments to the Pennsylvania School Code. He reviewed new provisions that pertain to the work of the Board, including a new role for the Board related to economic furloughs of professional employees. Mr. Rivera explained that when his office grants approval for a district to implement economic furloughs of professional employees the furloughs now must include an equal proportionate percentage of administrative staff unless the district seeks a waiver from the Secretary's office, at which point it will become the responsibility of the Board to review any such determination. Mr. Rivera also reviewed another change in Act 55 that extended the timeframe for updating the Master Plan for Basic Education and the Master Plan for Higher Education from five years to ten years.

Secretary Rivera then reported that this will be the final year that School Performance Profile scores will be used, with the exception of the requirements under Act 48, as the Department shifts to the Future Ready PA Index.

Mr. Rivera celebrated the 18 Pennsylvania schools that were selected as National Blue Ribbon Schools in 2017. He also recognized Melanie Cole, a teacher at Slippery Rock High School, who won a 2017 Milken Education Award.

Mr. Rivera concluded his report with an update on the state's Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Plan. He noted that the Department has spent two years in the planning and research phases and is now about to enter the implementation phase. Mr. Rivera announced that, through the Board, the Department will identify a Special Committee for ESSA Implementation Oversight. Mr. Rivera said that Karen Farmer-White will chair of committee, and will be joined in service by Carol Aichele and Nathan Barrett.

COMMITTEE REPORT
SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON THE ERIE COUNTY
COMMUNITY COLLEGE PLAN

Karen Molchanow, Executive Director of the Board, provided a report on behalf of the Committee. Ms. Molchanow noted that the Committee previously determined that it was vital to provide an opportunity for public input from members of the local community on Erie County's plan to establish a new community college. To that end, the Committee convened a public hearing in Erie at the Raymond Blasco Public Memorial Library on October 10, 2017. Ms. Molchanow said that 42 individuals spoke at the public hearing both in support of and in opposition to the community college plan, and she reviewed the participants list and summarized the nature of the comments received. In addition to accepting public comment, Ms. Molchanow said Erie County also was invited to make a brief presentation on its plan to the Committee.

Ms. Molchanow said the Committee's next steps will be to refine questions that it intends to present to Erie County seeking supplemental documentation to clarify certain aspects of the application. She said the Committee likely will hold a special meeting via conference call that will be made open and accessible to the public per Sunshine Act requirements.

Nicole Carnicella, member of the Special Committee, added that it was difficult to compare curricula to determine areas of potential duplication. Mr. Grandon asked if anyone had contacted the local Chamber of Commerce for information to support any of the public comments. Ms. Molchanow replied that the Committee is not in a position to conduct its own inquiry with outside parties. Ms. Dungee-Glenn inquired regarding whether any information had been submitted regarding the digital divide or accessibility, based upon an understanding of the Rural Regional College's (RRC) intent for digital/online course offerings. She further asked whether data regarding online access among Erie County residents would be among the information available to the committee. Ms. Molchanow replied that the committee has not yet discussed that level of specificity, but that the conversation is one worth engaging. Dr. Carnicella added that the RRC is adamant that it intends to have brick-and-mortar facilities in addition to online course offerings and that it plans to partner with business and industry to provide hands-on training. However, the RRC has not fully developed its programming yet, which Dr. Carnicella said is a

challenge in determining whether or not there is duplication between the Erie Community College proposal and the RRC.

REPORT OF THE DEPUTY SECRETARY
POSTSECONDARY AND HIGHER EDUCATION

Noe Ortega delivered his first report to the Council as the new Acting Deputy Secretary of Postsecondary and Higher Education. Mr. Ortega reiterated the mission of the Office of Postsecondary and Higher Education (OPHE) as one committed to both access and success and discussed the Change Model as his approach to leadership.

Mr. Ortega then presented data on where Pennsylvania stands toward meeting its 60% postsecondary attainment goal as compared to the national average in order to establish an understanding of the progress made thus far and what more is needed to reach the goal. He also presented aggregate data by county for the state and spoke to the importance of using such data to inform strategic action and to make investments in areas of the greatest need.

The Acting Deputy Secretary said discourse related to educational attainment needs to be reframed to focus not on problems and discrepancies but on how these circumstances can serve as opportunities to create change. Mr. Ortega offered an example of how this can be accomplished by examining attainment rates by different racial and ethnic groups, noting the differences between groups, and overlaying this data with where the population groups are located to determine whether there is a high correlation between counties that have low attainment and disadvantaged populations.

Mr. Ortega revisited the Change Model with emphasis on commitment, emphasizing those portions of OPHE's mission to which it will remain committed as established priority areas. He reported that a state team has been identified by Secretary Rivera to attend the next meeting of Complete College America, to work with other state agencies and state groups to work toward addressing the access and attainment problems faced by the state, and to develop a Master Plan for Higher Education. Mr. Ortega noted that Act 55 also includes an expansion of the statewide college credit transfer system to include standards for awarding credit for prior learning, such as AP, IB, CLEP and DANTES exams. Over the next year, Mr. Ortega said that PDE will work with the Transfer and Articulation Oversight Committee and the participating colleges to develop and implement these standards.

Mr. Ortega also noted that OPHE is continuing to review the Erie Community College Plan and anticipates providing a report of its findings to the Board's Special Committee in early 2018. He further reported that Pennsylvania is now a member state of the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA) and that 90 Pennsylvania institutions are participating in SARA. He also noted that the College Textbook Policies Advisory Committee continues to examine national efforts related to college textbook affordability and accessibility and that the Committee is preparing to establish recommendations for its 2018 report. He further reported that Act 55 repeals the requirement for the Community College Annual Report and provided an update on the Governor's It's On Us PA Grants.

Mr. Ortega also provided updates on collaborations with school guidance counselors regarding career readiness, PHEAA, the Council of Chief State School Officers, the State ESSA Plan, review of certification regulations, and the status of the Higher Education, Early Child Care and Community-based partnerships initiative, the Troops to Teachers Grant, and priority certificate application review for veterans.

ACT 101 PROGRAM REPORT

Elizabeth McCloud, Vice President of State Grants and Special Programs at the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency, provided the 2016-2017 Annual Report on the Act 101 Program, including an overview of the program and statistical data. She then after answered questions seeking clarification from members of the Board.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Grandon advised the public that anyone wishing to address the Council would be limited to three minutes per person.

Dr. Robert Sklaroff addressed the Council. He said the Holocaust Education and Human Rights Report slated for an upcoming vote is replete with error and insisted that the Board reject it. First, he said the report does not delineate what was done in schools regarding the Holocaust, genocide, and human rights as individual entities. Second, he said the legislation called for the Board to see what's being done educationally, not just what was being offered as an elective. Mr. Sklaroff then mentioned other issues he has raised in the past, including rejected requests for open records, as well as three higher education entities which he stated are problematic. He asserted that a keynote speaker at Kutztown University lied; that West Chester University gave awards to students for poetry related to Black Lives Matter when the awards were intended for Holocaust education; and that after the most recent mass shootings, a professor at one of the state's universities suggested that the event is due to masculine overexpression. Mr. Sklaroff expressed his belief that the Board should have some degree of oversight regarding these incidents and cited research he conducted which concluded that the number one prejudice on college campuses is against conservatives. He offered his email address and invited members of the Board to correspond with him directly.

Judy Bookhamer, Executive Director of the Pennsylvania School Counselors Association (PSAC), spoke in response to comments about whether school counselors have the resources, skills, and wherewithal to help prepare students for their postsecondary options and future success. She stated that school counselors receive training at the graduate level that addresses three domains: academic, career, and social/emotional. She further stated that PSCA's professional development strives to address information and resources that provide ongoing training for those school counselors in practice. Over the past 11 years, Ms. Bookhamer said that PSCA has provided significant information about career education and work standards which fall into the school counselor domain in many ways. Ms. Bookhamer noted that Acting Deputy Secretary Ortega's remark that school counselors have often been overlooked in the past is true. As key players in the postsecondary planning selection process, Ms. Bookhamer said she wished to say that the current administration has not been at fault in that way. She said that PSCA has worked carefully with Deputy Secretary Matthew Stem over the past year to raise awareness of

the role of school counselors in the postsecondary arena and that there has been significant progress in PSCA's partnership with the Department of Education.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no announcements.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further items of business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:40 p.m.

Karen Molchanow

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