

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

**333 Market Street | 1<sup>st</sup> Floor  
Harrisburg, PA 17126**

**January 10, 2018**

The meeting of the Council of Higher Education was called to order by Council Chairperson James Grandon at 1:02 p.m.

**Attending:**

James Agras (*via phone*)  
Andrew Ahr  
James Barker (*via phone*)  
Nathan Barrett  
Nicole Carnicella  
Ellie DeWitt

Sandra Dungee Glenn  
Donald Fey  
James Grandon  
Pamela Gunter-Smith (*via phone*)  
Kirk Hallett

Shirlann Harmon  
Maureen Lally-Green  
Jonathan Peri (*via phone*)  
Colleen Sheehan  
Karen Farmer White

**OPENING REMARKS**

Karen Farmer White, newly appointed Chair of the State Board of Education, opened the meeting of the Committee of the Whole. She thanked Governor Wolf and Secretary Rivera for entrusting her with the responsibility to lead the work of the Board, and stated her commitment and intentions for this work.

Secretary Rivera recognized the service of former Board Chairman Larry Wittig, who had been a member of the Board from 2001 through December 2017. The Secretary then welcomed Ms. Farmer White, the first African American Chair of the Board, and acknowledged her many educational and civic engagements contributing to the advancement of education in the Commonwealth.

Ms. Farmer White then recognized Council Chairman James Grandon for the Council of Higher Education.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

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

**COMMITTEE REPORT**  
**TEACHER AND SCHOOL LEADER EFFECTIVENESS COMMITTEE**

Sandra Dungee Glenn, Committee Chair, provided the following report on the Committee meeting held earlier that day. She said the focus of the meeting was to receive an annual report from the Department of Education on the state of educator certification in the Commonwealth. She noted that Pennsylvania has seen an alarming decrease in certifications over the past few years, which raised a question among members of the Committee regarding the quality of instruction in the classroom.

Ms. Dungee Glenn said the committee previously requested information on the issues driving the decline in certifications. To address that request, the committee heard from a panel of four national experts on issues related to teacher shortages, teacher retention, and attracting people to the field of education. She said the research presented was illuminating, and noted that teacher retention was highlighted as an area for further attention. Ms. Dungee Glenn noted that Chapter 49 is due for review and said recommended changes should be based on an examination of the teaching profession in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, the disconnect between new teachers and classroom students, and the need for other competency preparation.

Ms. Farmer White and Mr. Grandon echoed Ms. Dungee Glenn's sentiments of appreciation for the meeting.

**COMMITTEE REPORT**  
**SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON THE ERIE COUNTY**  
**COMMUNITY COLLEGE PLAN**

Karen Molchanow, the Board's Executive Director, reported that the Special Committee met on December 19, 2017. At that time, the Committee approved a supplemental information request seeking additional and clarifying information on Erie County's plan to establish a new community college. Ms. Molchanow said the request covers multiple areas, including local support for the institution, revenue and expenditure projections, and the curriculum of other regional postsecondary institutions. She stated that the request was transmitted to Erie County, and noted that the county may remit a response when it feels that it has adequately compiled the requested information.

**REPORT OF THE DEPUTY SECRETARY**  
**POSTSECONDARY AND HIGHER EDUCATION**

Noe Ortega, Acting Deputy Secretary of Postsecondary and Higher Education, offered the following report.

Mr. Ortega provided a snapshot of Pennsylvania's postsecondary attainment compared to the national average, as well as projections and subgroup breakdowns by population and by geographic region/county. He said this data should serve as guidance on where the state should focus its efforts. He presented additional data on declines in postsecondary enrollment, number of degrees awarded, appropriations to public universities, and postsecondary affordability. Mr. Ortega said a concerted effort must be made to ensure the development of a workforce equipped with the skills necessary to meet the needs of employers in a 21<sup>st</sup> Century knowledge-based global economy. He then spoke to strategies being employed by the Office of Postsecondary and Higher Education (OPHE) to accomplish this.

The Deputy Secretary then invited Amanda Harrison, Chief of the Division of Adult Education, for an informational presentation on Adult Basic Education and how this work contributes to postsecondary educational attainment. Ms. Harrison explained that adult basic education programming is administered under the federal Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act. The goal of the programs is to help adult learners who have basic skills below the postsecondary level to improve their skills to attain a high school completion equivalency if they do not already have a high school diploma, and, ultimately, to transition to employment and postsecondary education or training that leads to a credential and a career pathway. Ms. Harrison spoke to the grant criteria for qualifying program providers. She reiterated that the programs are for acquisition of basic skills, not occupational training, although she noted that there is a new program that blends the two.

In response to questions from members of the Board, Ms. Harrison explained that the services provided by the Division of Adult Education are pre-postsecondary only. In response to a question about other options for earning a high school equivalency in Pennsylvania, Ms. Harrison said the GED and HiSET exams and the 30 College Credit Option are other existing pathways. Deputy Secretary Ortega said it is important to understanding these efforts and initiatives as they are among the many pathways toward attainment.

Next, Mr. Ortega provided updates on OPHE's work in the following areas: Complete College America; the statewide college credit transfer system; community colleges; the College Textbook Policies Advisory Committee; engaging school counselors; the PHEAA Board and Outreach Committee; Departmental accountability; working with the U.S. Department of Education toward Educator Effectiveness; preparation for the Board's review of Chapter 49; Higher Education, Early Child Care and Community-based Partnerships grants; the Troops to Teachers program; and, the Governor's It's On Us PA grant competition.

In revisiting earlier portions of the Deputy Secretary's report, Mr. Grandon expressed concern that the graduation statistics presented by Mr. Ortega might be affected by students who enroll at community colleges for only a few courses with no intention of completing a full program. Mr. Ortega said PDE's postsecondary data is very limited and that the data pertains to completion outcomes, not enrollment, and that further information is required for a more nuanced picture of the educational landscape. Ms. Dungee Glenn also expressed a need for a sharper focus on the data being collected. Mr. Grandon then asked how fluctuations due to migration into and out of the state affect the data.

Colleen Sheehan inquired about efforts related to educator effectiveness and whether the Department was looking at all educators as part of that work. Mr. Ortega replied that the current context for that conversation is on K-12 teachers and school leaders because of the focus of the state's ESSA plan.

Maureen Lally-Green asked how students are kept engaged to collect information about their pursuits post-graduation.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Mr. Grandon advised the public that anyone wishing to address the Board would be limited to three minutes per person, in the interest of time.

Jay Hertzog, Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Association of Colleges and Teacher Educators (PAC-TE), promoted PAC-TE's spring conference. He noted that Deputy Secretary Ortega is scheduled to be one of the speakers and made the Board aware of how members can register to attend. Mr. Hertzog then went on to address the Board as a former dean of education and as a former principal and assistant superintendent in a K-12 environment. He stated that he had read one of the meeting handouts on the STEM education and that he found it deeply concerning. He said that a lot is missing in K-12 education, notably the arts. Mr. Hertzog said his grandchildren attend school in Arizona where they participate in STEAM, which includes the arts. He also openly wondered what has happened to history, geography, literature, and fine music. He expressed concern that when education places itself on one track, it loses the others, which he said are equally valuable. He said that he has expressed this concern as an educator for 41 years.

### **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Mr. Hallett raised an issue of concern related to access to early childhood education in the Harrisburg School District. He said Headstart – the only early childhood education provider for low-income families in Harrisburg – has 500 children enrolled with an additional 400 children on a waitlist. Mr. Hallett expressed concern about a lack of services for those children on the waitlist. Secretary Rivera recognized Mr. Hallett's concern and noted that 60% of children that qualify for early childhood education statewide are unserved. Mr. Ortega also commented that this issue serves as a reminder that the Council's conversations are a "cradle to grave trajectory" regarding educational attainment.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further items of business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:19 p.m.



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Karen Molchanow