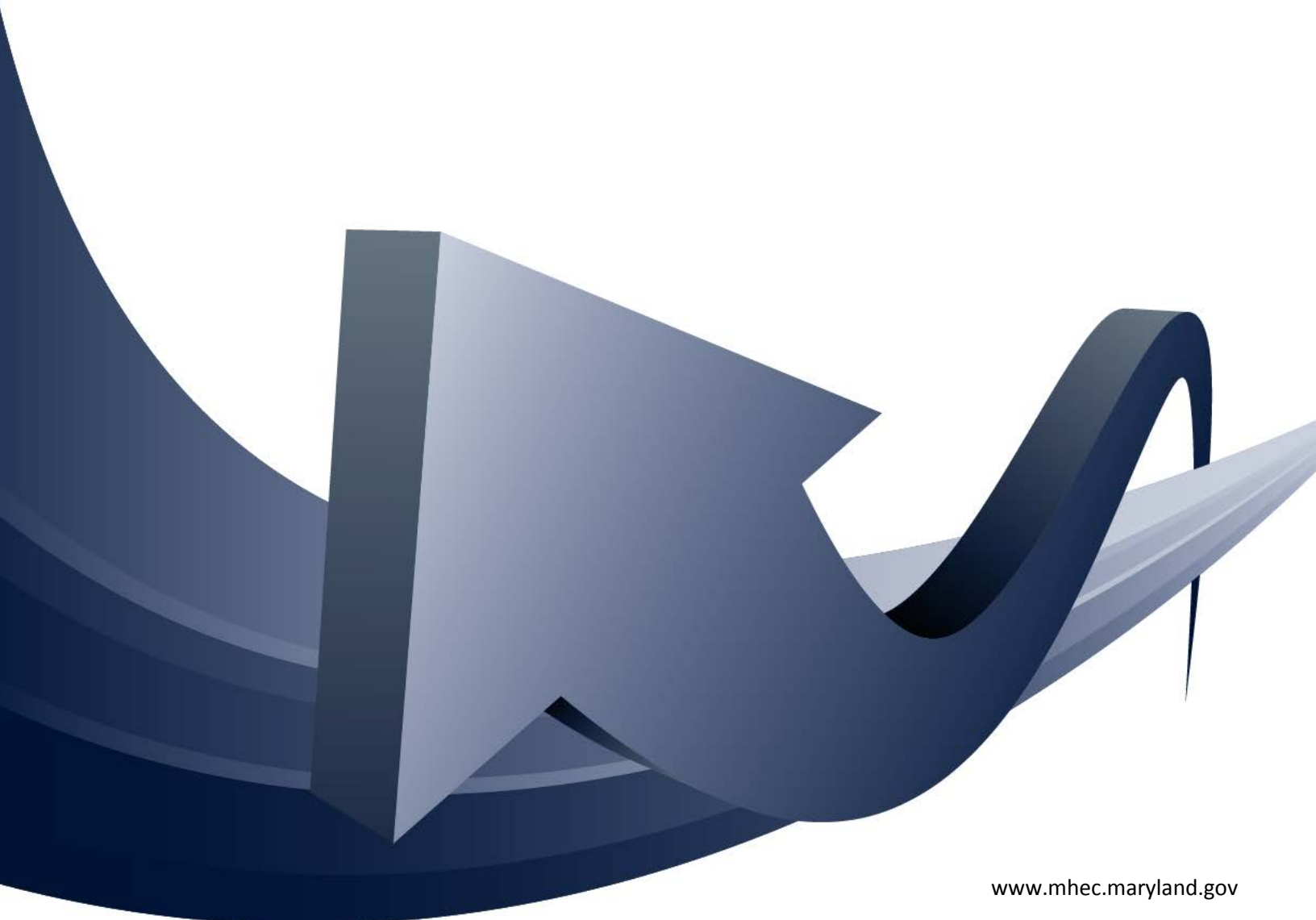




MARYLAND HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION
STRATEGIC PLAN
2016-2019



Section 1 – MISSION AND VISION

Under Acting Secretary Jennie C. Hunter-Cevera, a Strategic Planning Committee was created to develop a strategic plan that aligned with Governor Hogan’s vision for MHEC: to become a more robust and rigorous agency that assists Marylanders who are currently in or plan to attend a postsecondary institution. In preparing the new four year Strategic Plan, MHEC solicited and received input from our Commissioners. Commissioners Ian MacFarlane and Rizwan Siddiqi led a workgroup to develop the plan comprised of representatives from each unit within the agency. Four group meetings were held as well as sub-committee meetings to work on specific goals.

The MHEC strategic plan is based on input from employee surveys, the effectiveness and efficiency outcomes, and individual meetings the Acting Secretary had with employees. Beginning with the Mission and Vision for MHEC, strategic goals were established and performance/outcome goals identified to monitor results. The result of this exercise yielded improved service to the citizens of Maryland and timely responses to legislators, universities, faculty, students, parents and other stakeholders.

MHEC Vision

The vision of MHEC is to ensure that Maryland residents have the opportunity to benefit from a higher education that enriches their lives and advances their contributions to civic life, economic development, and social progress of the State.

MHEC Mission

The mission of MHEC is to be recognized and utilized as the lead agency for all matters pertaining to higher education and put our stakeholders first in meeting their needs to obtain high quality, accessibility and affordability to higher education in Maryland.

Guiding Principles

Integrity:

- Perform with the highest ethical standards of individual and group honesty.
- Communicate openly and realistically with each other and our clients.

Respect for the Individual:

- Treat one another fairly, with dignity and equity.
- Support each other to develop to our full potential.

Excellence:

- Strive to deliver results with exceptional quality and value.

Innovation:

- Encourage multidisciplinary collaboration, creativity, and independent thinking in everything we do.

Respect for MHEC:

- Recognize that the strength of MHEC lies in our commitment, collectively and individually, to MHEC's vision, mission, values, strategies, and practices.
- Commitment to the MHEC is the foundation for all other organizational commitments.

Fiscal Responsibility:

- Operate with financial integrity and transparency.
- Accountable for cost competitiveness and continuing financial responsibility.

Objectivity:

- Work independent of undue influences by political, economic, or other factors.
- Maintain the highest level of objectivity in our work.

Security:

- Protect the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of information being processed, stored, and transmitted electronically

MHEC SWOT Analysis*Strengths*

- Experienced work force
- Strong senior leadership
- Critical mission that everyone is dedicated to carrying out
- Strong network with higher education in State and out of State
- Good collaborations sustained over decades

Weaknesses

- Lack a sense of urgency to respond
- Culture embedded over the years as being reactive rather than proactive
- Limited number of staff to respond to workload and regulatory timelines within COMAR
- Facilities not conducive to team work
- Lack of clear internal communication
- Deficient operating budget to keep pace with work load, new tasks, and unfunded mandates
- Low salaries and compensation which has led to retention problems

Opportunities

- Higher education is changing thus new regulations and programs will be required
- New State initiatives for collaborations that MHEC can coordinate and oversee
- Outreach is in high demand and other State agencies are willing to work with us to reach as many students as possible across the State
- High demand for MHEC staff to be more visible externally

Threats

- Proposals to merge MHEC with MSDE, the prospect of which disturbs MHEC's relationships across the state and which threatens to undercut MHEC's ability to carry out assigned functions
- Loss of funding to support programs
- Mission creep from other agencies
- Lack of opportunities for career growth within MHEC
- Low employee morale due to crowded space within our current facilities

Section 2 – Strategic Context

Introduction

MHEC coordinates the growth and development of post-secondary education in Maryland. In keeping with the goals outlined in the State Plan for Postsecondary Education, the Commission establishes statewide policies for public and private colleges and universities, and for private career schools. The Commission reviews and approves the start-up and continuation of new colleges and universities in Maryland as well as requests for new academic programs at established schools. Additionally, MHEC serves as the administrator for state financial aid programs. We are also becoming more active in outreach regarding our financial aid programs and other relevant information concerning our institutions of higher learning including trade schools.

MHEC Organization and Programs *(See Appendix 1 for Organizational Chart)*

MHEC’s functional units consist of the following departments:

Unit 1 - Department of Program Review and Compliance (PRC) (formerly Academic Affairs)

Dr. Jennifer Frank

Overall responsibility is to approve academic programs offered by public and private postsecondary institutions, (both two and four year degree granting institutions), including private career schools. The needs of education and training programs as well as plans for such programs are reviewed by the agency to ensure that the institution has the facilities, equipment, faculty and infrastructure to offer both classroom and/or on-line courses. Market analysis and indicators of economic benefits are conducted to validate the need for such programs and to ensure alignment with current workforce needs in Maryland. Duplication of programs is also considered as a factor in granting approval. The department has four groups: collegiate, out-of-state on-line, trade schools, and veteran affairs. The program reviews of out-of-state on-line coursework are also reviewed by this unit. The Academic Common Market and Academic Program Inventory databases are maintained within this unit. In addition, MHEC serves as Maryland’s State Approving Agency (SAA) for Veterans Education Programs.

Unit 2 - Department of Finance Policy and Operations (FPO)

Geoffrey Newman

The Department of Finance Policy and Operations administers the largest portion of State funds in the MHEC budget, over \$400 million annually in State aid programs to community colleges, independent colleges and universities, and regional higher education centers. Major activities associated with these responsibilities include reviewing and certifying audited enrollment numbers; analyzing financial statements; calculating funding formulas and determining the level of State aid; certifying the use of funds; analyzing annual budget requests; developing guidelines; verifying documentation and processing all requests for State matching funds; and preparing budget projections. Other responsibilities include developing the annual operating funding guidelines for public four-year colleges and universities and administering the enhancement fund for the State’s Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs).

In addition, staff members prepare fiscal notes on issues affecting higher education policy and provide research and data analysis on a myriad of financing issues.

Office of Budget and Finance

Jeff Cann

The Office of Budget and Administration is responsible for the overall fiscal and budgetary coordination for the agency including procurement; accounts payable/receivable; payroll; budget formulation and submission; and fiscal year end close-out. The Office is also responsible for accurately recording and processing financial transactions for all fund sources for the agency. Duties also include monitoring programs within the agency budget, revenue collections, grants and inventory management, and general day to day accounting activities.

Office of Student Financial Assistance (OSFA)

Donna Thomas

The Office is responsible for all State student financial aid programs, administering over \$100 million in grants and scholarships in Maryland. Financial aid programs include need-based grants which are awarded on the basis of the student's ability to pay; merit-based scholarships given to students with special talents; career-based scholarships for students entering certain workforce programs; awards to unique populations, such as military veterans; and legislative scholarships. Students may use this aid at community colleges, independent colleges and universities, private career schools, and State public four-year institutions.

Through the Maryland College Aid Processing System (MDCAPS), the Office processes State scholarship applications and allocates available funds. Using this System, students can apply on-line for certain scholarships, check application status, accept or decline awards, and change enrollment status.

Office of Facilities/ Capital Budget Oversight

David Beard

The Office is responsible for capital budget management for higher education. It administers the Community College Capital Grant program, an \$80 million capital bond program, which provides State assistance for the construction and improvement of facilities at community colleges. The Office also administers the Facilities Master Plan and capital review process for all higher education institutions, and is the only State agency that performs an academic analysis of all higher education capital proposals. In addition, it develops and maintains capital budget priorities, and ranks capital budget requests in relation to budget priorities.

Office of Information Technology (IT)

Parris Jackson

The Office of Information Technology (IT) manages the technical needs of the Commission. This unit is responsible for (1) providing technical support and security for the overall architecture of hardware, software, and local area network infrastructure to support the activities and services of the agency; (2) managing the Maryland Annual Collection (MAC) system consisting of over 20 aggregate surveys and 9

major data systems for enrollment, degree, financial aid, student registration, teacher education, and employee data from 59 institutions and financial aid from 170+ private career schools; and (3) submitting higher education data to the Integrated Postsecondary Educational Data System (IPEDS), a federal requirement, and the Maryland Longitudinal Data System Center (MLDSC), a state requirement.

Unit 3 – Department of Outreach for Public, Student, Legislative and Corporate Relations: Lee Towers

Office of Public Relations

Phyllis Reese

The Office of Public Relations manages internal and external communications, creates and manages special projects, communicates with media, writes press releases, monitors MHEC’s website for accuracy, handles all Public Information Requests, and assists units with public relations matters.

Office of Outreach and Grants Management (OGM)

Andrenette Mack-Augins

The Office is responsible for conducting statewide outreach activities with the goal of enrolling and graduating more Marylanders from postsecondary education. Outreach staff members conduct financial aid and college planning presentations; create and issue financial aid and college planning publications, videos, social media, mobile apps, websites, and webinars; and coordinate other activities to encourage college preparation, enrollment, and success for high school students and returning adult learners. Special focus is given to low income and underrepresented students throughout Maryland. In addition, the Office administers federal, State, and special fund grant programs focused on college access and success, workforce development, scientific research, higher education reforms, and teacher professional development. In addition, OGM administers over \$20 million annually in grants. OGM seeks funding by writing proposals and obtaining grants from external sources (federal and philanthropic), administers competitive sub-grant programs, and manages State-funded grant programs.

Office of Legislative Affairs

Lee Towers

MHEC’s liaison with State and federal government is the Office of Legislative Affairs. The Office coordinates the preparation of legislation the Department wants introduced, and analyzes other legislation for its impact on the agency.

Office of Corporate Relations

Lee Towers

This office coordinates efforts regarding higher education and workforce development with the Department of Business and Economic Development (DBED), the Department of Labor, Licensing, and Regulation (DLLR), and the Governor’s Office of Federal Relations.

Unit 4 - Office of Research and Policy Analysis (RPA)**Dr. Jon Enriquez**

MHEC collects and maintains statewide data, collected from colleges and universities, on students, degrees, facilities, finances, financial aid, and employees, for several purposes. Chief among these purposes is to provide the State's executive and legislative branches with accurate information and analysis about higher education and related policies, and most of this information is provided by MHEC's Office of Research and Policy Analysis (RPA). The items prepared by RPA include:

- Policy studies, information reports, and statistical reports;
- The State's higher education performance accountability process, including the statutorily required annual report to the Governor and the Maryland General Assembly;
- Enrollment projections for the public campuses;
- The Data Book, an annual statistical abstract;
- Data and analysis for the Maryland Longitudinal Data System Center;
- The agency's yearly Managing for Results (MFR) submission;
- Analyses of effectiveness of State financial aid programs;
- Ad hoc analyses for projects such as the development of the State Plan; and
- Requests from outside parties, including other State agencies, colleges and universities, businesses and nonprofit organizations, the media, and the general public.

Section 3 – GOALS AND STRATEGIES

Strategic Goal 1:

Improve response time to inquiries.

Responsible Director: Donna Thomas (OSFA) & Jennifer Frank (PRC)

MHEC surveyed Financial Assistance Officers at institutions of higher education in Maryland. Preliminary review of the data indicated that MHEC needs to improve response time to our customers/clients. Customer service assessment surveys are now being developed for students served by the Office of Student Financial Assistance (OSFA) and the institutions served by the Department of Program Reviews and Compliance (PRC). MHEC will strive to improve response time to inquiries from prospective and/or current scholarship recipients received through telephone calls, emails, and written correspondence.

Performance Goals	Baseline	2017 Target
1. Time between initial written inquiry (include telephone message left) and response.	Three days to weeks	48 hours
2. Wait time for telephone inquiries.	30 – 45 minutes	15 minutes

Strategy 1.1 Establish policy and practice to respond to inquiries within 48 hours of receipt.

- Tactic A. Categorize the inquiries and create a template to address the various inquiries.
- Tactic B. Have one point person within each unit be responsible for reviewing the inquiry and assigning it to the right person for a response.
- Tactic C. Schedule time for the group to meet each day to address inquiries.

Strategy 1.2 Cross train employees to provide answers to phone inquiries.

- Tactic A. Hold training sessions with units that receive the phone inquiries.
- Tactic B. Create manual for easy reference to answers to the questions.
- Tactic C. Log inquiries plus the response and if the inquiry was addressed satisfactorily.

Strategy 1.3 Have receptionist directly transfer call to appropriate unit and person within MHEC.

- Tactic A. Create a directory of ‘question types’ to align with ‘correct person’ to address the questions.

Strategic Goal 2:

Enhance collaboration with national, state, and regional educational partners to expand informational opportunities for students entering or continuing in post-secondary education to ensure success.

Responsible Director: Andrenette Mack-Augins (Outreach and Grants Management)

Improving access to higher education can only be achieved by maximizing the degree of information sharing. In order to achieve this, MHEC will seek collaboration with national, state, and regional education partners and other interested parties to ensure that students are provided with all of the information they need to plan their educational career. Achieving this goal can only be achieved by enhancing outreach efforts to not only schools, but also to faith-based organizations, businesses, and civic organizations.

Performance Goals	Baseline FY2015	Target Date	Target Amount
1. Number of information sharing events attended by	103	2018	125
2. Network of organizations to share information.	48	2019	60

Strategy 2.1. Develop outreach program based on collaborations to leverage both human and financial resources.

- Tactic A. Partner with MICUA, USM and MACC to discuss avenues of disseminating outreach materials on higher education across the State.
- Tactic B. Have students talk about their college experience on our web site.
- Tactic C. Partner with the Governor’s Commission for Community Initiatives as well as MSDE and other agencies to increase the number of events MHEC representatives attend to discuss financial aid for higher education.
- Tactic D. Reach out to other non-profits, including faith-based organizations, and hold meetings on site in various communities around the State.

Strategy 2.2 Apply for non-State funding to continue outreach programs.

- Tactic A. Apply for federal grants from several agencies such as DoE, NSF, NIH, etc.
- Tactic B. Start applying to foundations that support outreach programs on higher education.

Strategy 2.3 Meet with and present to various caucuses in the General Assembly to arrange for community meetings and faith based organizations events where we can discuss higher education and the possibilities of many career tracks.

- Tactic A. Create an outreach team within each caucus.
- Tactic B. Provide materials in foreign languages for distribution.

Strategic Goal 3:**Improve MHEC’s information/message delivery utilizing multiple social media.****Responsible Director: Phyllis Reese (Public Relations)**

Methods currently employed by MHEC allow us to reach only a portion of our target audience. This can be attributed to the current methods utilized. In order to reach MHEC’s target audience, new strategies must be developed. No longer can we expect to reach high school age students utilizing traditional television shows. In order to reach this demographic group we must enhance our web presence and focus more on social media. One method we will offer will be the development of an app to guide prospective students to help them identify a possible institution, major, and any financial assistance that may be available.

Performance Goals	Baseline FY2015	Target Date
1. Redesign websites.	Current website	2015
2. Expand use of social media.	Facebook Twitter	2016
3. Develop App for high school students exploring college opportunities.	New development	2016

Strategy 3.1 Develop the Roadmap for New Horizons (higher education opportunities that also list financial aid categories, programs, etc.).

- Tactic A. Hold a grand challenge for our colleges to develop the app in partnership with MHEC.
- Tactic B. Do an RFP to find a company that can develop the app.
- Tactic C. Write a white paper and have one of the many foundations in Maryland fund the app development in partnership with one of our colleges and MHEC.

Strategy 3.2 Make better use of social media networks to share information with prospective and current students about scholarship opportunities.

- Tactic A. Schedule interviews on talk radio.
- Tactic B. Create videos on YouTube.
- Tactic C. Improve our Facebook page and increase the usage of our Twitter account.

Strategy 3.3. Redesign MHEC’s websites to make it more user friendly, including use of videos.

- Tactic A. Translate the web site into several languages.
- Tactic B. Continually update and change topics of interest to high school students on the web site.
- Tactic C. Have a step by step video of how to fill out the FASFA forms.

Strategic Goal 4:**Improve MHEC’s responsiveness to statutory obligations.****Responsible Director: Jennifer Frank (PRC) & Lee Towers (Legislative Affairs)**

Changing economic climates create tremendous challenges for managers. As resources decline, doing more with less adds to those challenges each year. Statutory requirements are not affected by these changes and they must still be met. Meeting these challenges provides the opportunity to measure the effectiveness of an agency.

Performance Goals	Baseline FY2015	2016 Target
1. Number of on-time program reviews completed annually.	40%	100%
2. Timely submission of reports mandated by statute.	83%	100%

Strategy 4.1

Achieve an increase in efficiency and productivity to 100% for on-time program reviews.

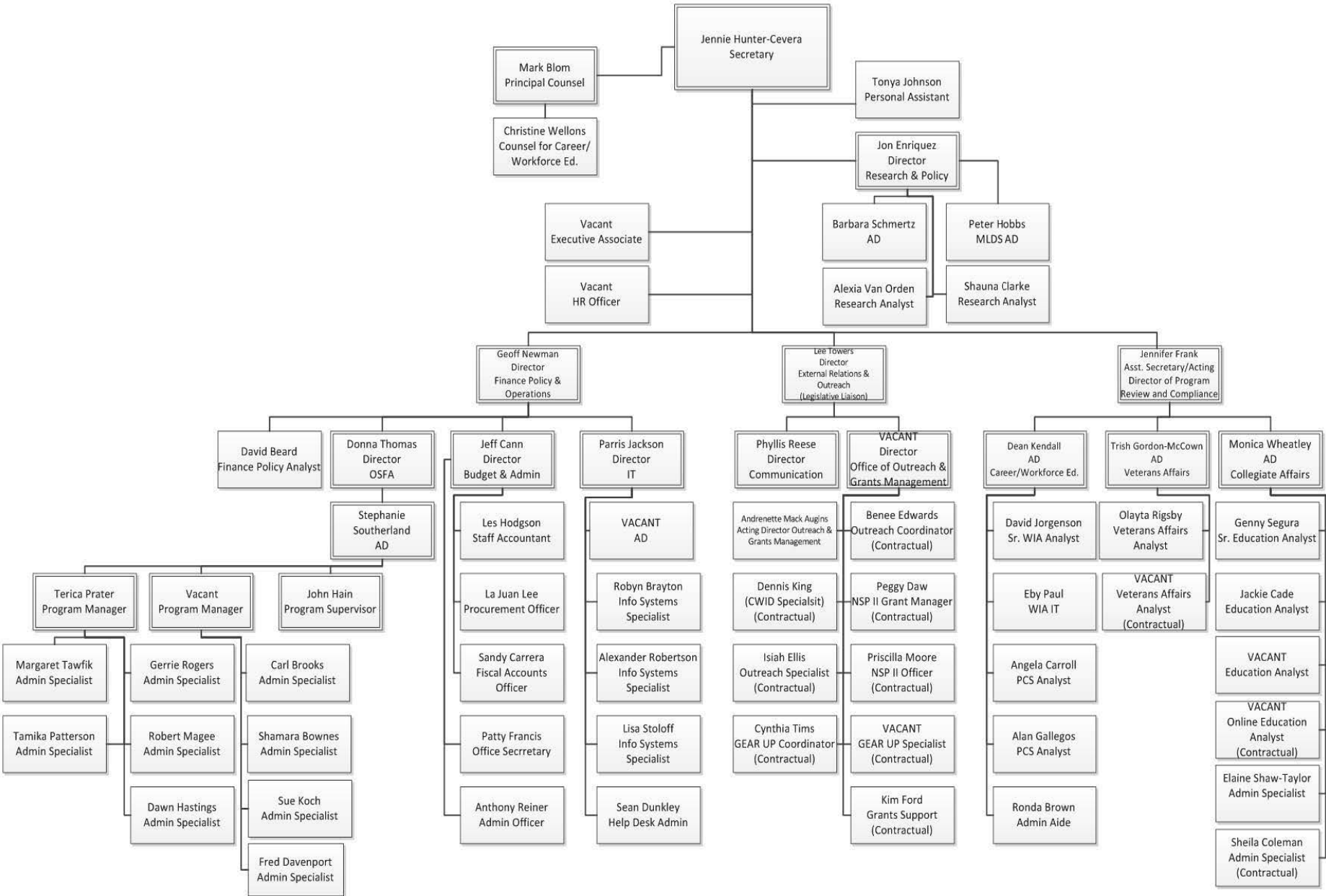
- Tactic A. Develop a systems approach by employing triage to categorize the complexity of the proposal and assign accordingly to the educational analysts.
- Tactic B. Implement the ‘pod’ approach to team review where each pod consists of three to five staff that can move between pods so that at any given time, a proposal is being reviewed and moved through the system.
- Tactic C. Send out the proposal for the 30 day review period by institutional peers when the proposal is received.
- Tactic D. Assign one point person to work with another point person at each institution to obtain additional required information and to give status updates.
- Tactic E. Color code proposals and publicly viewed data management system on line so that anyone can tell immediately where a proposal is in the system.

Strategy 4.2

Increase our submission rate of reports to being on time to 100%.

- Tactic A. Keep an MHEC wide calendar of assignments and due dates.
- Tactic B. Assign one senior staff member to be the oversight director of making sure the reports are written and delivered on time.
- Tactic C. Establish internal due dates one month before external due dates

APPENDIX 1 – ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



APPENDIX 2 – STRATEGIC PLAN SUMMARY CHART

Strategic Goal 1 - Improve response time to inquiries.	
Performance Goal 1-1	Time between initial written inquiry (including phone messages) and response established at 48 hours.
Indicator	New performance measure
Data Source	OSFA Call Center

Performance Goal 1-2	Wait time for telephone inquiries.
Indicator	New performance measure
Data Source	OSFA Call Center

Strategic Goal 2 - Enhance collaboration with national, state, and regional educational partners to expand informational opportunities for students entering or continuing in post-secondary education to ensure success.	
Performance Goal 2-1	Maximize the number of events attended by MHEC staff to increase outreach to prospective students.
Indicator	Number of information sharing events attended by MHEC staff increased to 125.
Data Source	OGM

Performance Goal 2-2	Utilization of established networks to share information with prospective/current college students to inform them of scholarship opportunities will improve outreach efforts.
Indicator	Increase number of network of organizations to 60.
Data Source	OGM

Strategic Goal 3 - Improve MHEC's information/message delivery utilizing multiple social media.	
Performance Goal 3-1	Redesign MHEC's websites.
Indicator	Both websites are redesigned to be user friendly.
Data Source	IT

Performance Goal 3-2	Utilize social media to reach a greater number of our target demographic group.
Indicator	Increase in social media traffic utilizing monitoring apps.
Data Source	OGM

Performance Goal 3-3	Develop app to offer to high school students.
Indicator	App developed.
Data Source	OGM

Strategic Goal 4 - Improve MHEC's responsiveness to statutory obligations.	
Performance Goal 4-1	Achieve an increase in efficiency for on-time program reviews.
Indicator	On-time program reviews completed in accordance with statute.
Data Source	PRC

Performance Goal 4-2	Achieve an increase in efficiency for on-time report submissions.
Indicator	Timely submission of reports mandated by statute.
Data Source	Legislative Affairs