



MEMORANDUM

TO: Maryland Higher Education Commission
FROM: Elena Quiroz-Livanis, Interim Secretary
DATE: April 15, 2026
SUBJECT: April Maryland Higher Education Commission Meeting

This memo serves as a summary of the April 22, 2026 Maryland Higher Education Commission meeting. Meeting materials can be accessed here <https://mhec.maryland.gov/About/Pages/agendadetails.aspx?aid=572>

2026-2030 Maryland State Plan Update (2026–2030).

MHEC staff will provide an update on the development of the 2026–2030 State Plan for Higher Education, including emerging strategy direction informed by a statewide survey. The presentation will also include revised statewide targets and initial performance indicators to frame how progress will be measured, as well as efforts to align with the Moore–Miller Administration’s workforce and economic priorities.

This update is intended to guide Commission input as the plan moves toward a near-final draft in May and final adoption in June.

Research & Data Dashboard Overview.

The Commission will receive an overview of the Research and Policy Analysis key initiatives and data tools supporting decision-making. This includes:

- Current and forthcoming dashboards;
- Annual reporting cadence; and
- Enhanced use of data analytics to inform policy, track performance, and support transparency.

Legislative Update.

The Commission will receive a high-level overview of the 2026 Legislative Session, including the status of priority legislation, policy developments, and anticipated next steps following *sine die*. This update will also highlight the scope of legislative reporting requirements and operational improvement intended to streamline processes while maintaining transparency and accountability.

FY2027 Budget & Finance Update

The Commission will receive updates on both operating and capital budget outcomes for FY2027, including key decisions impacting student financial assistance programs and the state's postsecondary education ecosystem.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me directly or Tiffany Majors, Chief of Staff, at tiffany.majors@maryland.gov.



MARYLAND HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION MEETING

April 22, 2026
10:00 a.m.

Virtual Meeting

<https://meet.google.com/ryz-hpnd-wct>

Agenda¹

- I. CALL TO ORDER**
- II. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES**
- III. REMARKS**
 - A. Commission Chair
 - B. Interim Secretary
- IV. 2026-2030 MARYLAND STATE PLAN FOR HIGHER EDUCATION UPDATES**
- V. RESEARCH & DATA DASHBOARDS**
- VI. LEGISLATIVE UPDATES**
- VII. FY2027 BUDGET UPDATES**
- VIII. OTHER BUSINESS**
- IX. PUBLIC COMMENT ²**
- X. ADJOURNMENT**

¹ The above listings of matters before the Maryland Higher Education Commission are those reasonably anticipated by the Chair of the Commission to be discussed at the meeting. Not all items listed may in fact be discussed and other items, not listed, may also be brought up for discussion, to the extent such is permitted by law.

² The Commission may reserve time during the agenda of its regular meetings for public participation. The Chairperson may exercise discretion to waive the notice requirement set forth above and invite an individual(s) present at the meeting to address the Commission. Any person wishing to testify before the Commission must submit a written request to do so. The request must be addressed to the Secretary of Higher Education or to the Chair, and it must be sent to the attention of Tiffany Majors, tiffany.majors1@maryland.gov. Written requests to testify will be accepted only until 72 hours prior to the meeting date. A request to testify will be acted upon by the Chair, who may, at his or her discretion, deny it, grant it, or grant it subject to time limitations, as described in Section II. Unless the Chair specifies otherwise, the maximum speaking time afforded to each individual making public comments will be three minutes.

Maryland Higher Education Commission

Meeting Minutes: Wednesday, March 25, 2026

Time: 10:00 AM – 12:57 PM EST

Location: Google Meet

Chair: Chair Motz

Minute Taker: Alexandra Nguyen

I. Attendance

Commissioners Present: Chair Motz, Chike Aguh (Vice Chair), Kathleen Bands, Mickey L. Burnim, Charlene Dukes, Barbara Kerr Howes, Narcisa Polonio, Sheila Thompson, Craig Williams, Janet Wormack.

Commissioners Absent: Rebecca Taber Staehelin, Student Commissioner Sarah Otwey.

II. Welcome & Executive Transitions

Chair Motz announced several key leadership transitions:

- **Secretary Sanjay Rai:** Stepping down after nearly three years of service; Deputy Secretary Elena Quiroz-Livanis will serve as Interim Secretary effective Friday. Commissioners and staff expressed deep gratitude for his collaborative leadership and work on the State Plan.
 - **Kimberly Ward:** Principal Counsel has transitioned to an administrative law judge role; Assistant Attorney General Elisabeth Layton is currently managing the office.
 - **Dominic Ionta:** Introduced as the new Assistant Secretary for Finance and Administration, succeeding Geoff Newman.
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III. Review & Approval of Previous Minutes

The minutes from the February 25, 2026, meeting were reviewed.

- **Motion:** Approved unanimously.
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IV. Business Items

A. 2025 Performance Accountability Report (PAR)

Dr. Schmertz presented the 2025 PAR, a statutory report summarizing institutional progress toward established benchmarks.

- **Enrollment Trends:** Undergraduate enrollment is returning to pre-pandemic levels, with community college enrollment increasing by 7.6% from Fall 2022 to Fall 2024.
- **Retention & Completion Gaps:** Despite overall gains, a growing discrepancy exists in success markers for African-American students compared to the state average.
- **Reporting Changes:** Seven of the 13 public four-year institutions ceased reporting data disaggregated by race/ethnicity, shifting focus to Pell recipients and first-generation status.
- **Action:** The Commission unanimously approved the 2025 PAR for submission to the Governor and General Assembly.

B. Legislative Update

Executive Director Meghan Music reported on the 2026 session:

- **Departmental Priority:** SB 207/HB 231, which delays the decentralization of the Guaranteed Access Grant program until the 2029–2030 award year.
- **Budget Status:** The higher education budget increased by approximately 3% (\$100 million) despite fiscal challenges.

C. Maryland Transfer Intensive

Dr. Emily Dow and Tania LaViolet (Aspen Institute) updated the Commission on the statewide initiative to improve transfer outcomes.

- **Opportunity:** Approximately 4,500 community college graduates annually could benefit from transferring but do not.
- **Commitments:** 25 participating institutions have finalized "STEP" plans involving dual/guaranteed admissions and faculty engagement to create fairer pathways.

D. 2026–2030 Maryland State Plan Update

Deputy Secretary Quiroz-Livanis and the State Plan team presented the developing framework.

- **Goal 1 (Attainment):** Focuses on increasing award production by inclusive types, including certificates and graduate degrees.
- **Goal 2 (Value/Mobility):** Leverages the Maryland Longitudinal Data System (MLDS) to track regional labor market participation and "private earnings as public returns."
- **Commission Direction:** Commissioners reaffirmed the requirement to continue disaggregating data by race/ethnicity in the final plan.

E. Maryland Fire Rescue Education & Training Commission (MFRETC) Regulations

The Commission considered a regulatory amendment to address an instructor shortage.

- **Action:** Unanimously approved an alternative pathway for instructor trainers based on high-level successful experience rather than strictly requiring advanced degrees.

F. Workforce Needs Analysis

Dr. Dow outlined the 2026 analysis, which aligns academic program development with "Lighthouse Sectors" identified by the Department of Commerce (e.g., life sciences, quantum computing).

V. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 12:57 PM. The Commission will convene in May for a final vote on the State Plan and a retreat.

Action Items Summary

- **Dr. Emily Dow:** Share the Aspen Institute "Transfer Intensive" slides with the Commission.
- **Dr. Schmertz:** Provide a follow-up comparison of Maryland's six-year graduation rates against national averages.
- **Alexandra Nguyen:** Schedule a new date for the all-day Commissioner retreat in May.

Approved by the Commission:

Catherine J. "Cassie" Motz, Chair