MARYLAND HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION

MEETING BOOKLET

Time: 10:00 AM
          Wednesday, June 26, 2024

Place: Maryland Higher Education Commission
          Nancy S. Grasmick Education Building
          7th Floor Boardroom

Maryland Higher Education Commission

Maryland Higher Education Commission
Meeting Agenda

TIME: 10:00 a.m.   **PLACE:**   7th Floor Boardroom
           Wednesday   Nancy S. Grasmick State Education Bldg.
           June 26, 2024   200 West Baltimore Street
                                            Baltimore, Maryland 21201

	Page	**Action Item**

Call to Order

Chair's and Secretary's Remarks

Public Comments

Department of Finance and Administration – Mr. Geoffrey Newman

- Financial Aid Updates – Mr. Geoffrey Newman

Department of External Relations – Mr. Derrick Coley

- FAFSA Outreach Grant – Mr. Derrick Coley

Department of Academic Affairs – Dr. Emily Dow

- Implementation of **HB 1244** – Dr. Emily Dow

Proposed Topics for Upcoming Commission Meetings – Dr. Emily Dow

Adjournment

The next Commission meeting is on Wednesday, July 24, 2024 @ 10:00 a.m.

Maryland Higher Education Commission
Meeting Minutes

February 28, 2024
10:00 a.m.

The Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) met virtually (via Google Meet) on Wednesday, February 28, 2024.

Commission members present:

Catherine J. "Cassie" Motz, Chair	Sheila D. Thompson, Ph.D.
Chike Aguh, Vice Chair	Craig A. Williams, Ph.D.
Barbara Kerr Howe	Janet E. Wormack, Ed.D.
Ray Serrano, Ph.D.	Cierra M. Robinson, Student Commissioner

Commission members absent:

Mickey L. Burnim, Ph.D.	Rebecca Taber Staehelin
Charlene Mickens Dukes, Ed.D.	

Staff members present:

Sanjay Rai, Ph.D.	Emily A. A. Dow, Ph.D.
Anthony Reiner	Allie Edelstein
Lyndsay Silva, D.P.A.	Kimberly Smith Ward
Derrick Coley	Bryson Barksdale
Daniel Schuster	Frances Turner
Al Dorsett	Deborah Ing
Geoffrey Newman	Rose Robinson
Alexis Merriman	Jennifer Fischetti
Victoria Johnson	

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by **Chair Motz** at approximately 10:00 a.m. A meeting quorum was established with eight (8) out of eleven (11) members present.

Public Comments

There were no public comments.

Student Advisory Council – Recommendations Regarding 2024 Elections and Student Participation

Ms. Alexis Faison, Chair of the Student Advisory Council, noted that much of the feedback given by the Commissioners on the recommendations presented at the December meeting was incorporated into these revised recommendations.

As the representatives of Maryland's student voice to the Commission, the council recognizes the plethora of existing efforts to engage students and young adults to vote. They also recognize that, as an advisory council to the Commission, it is important to ensure these efforts are sustained throughout Maryland. They recognize that these efforts empower students to be active participants in the civic process of elections.

Therefore, the Student Advisory Council recommends that the Commission and the Secretary of Higher Education recognize, lift up, and continue to support the existing efforts – both through campus-based efforts and through existing organizations – that intend to increase civic participation among college students and reduce barriers that obstruct students from voting, such as:

- Providing resources and supports to students to participate as Election Judges;
- Providing accommodations and resources to out-of-state students;
- Reviewing the 2024-25 academic calendar (and 2026-27 and 2028-29) and make appropriate amendments/guidance to participate in the voting process (such as highlighting the primary election day and regular election day in the academic calendar);
- And, generally, encouraging students to participate in our nation's democratic process (e.g., registering to vote, using campus space as polling places, etc.).

The advisory council recognizes that there are many organizations already doing this work, such as the League of Women Voters. She also noted that legislation exists, requiring institutions, in various ways, to encourage students to vote. They came up with a timeline of suggested activities for campuses to follow, such as providing information to students on how to register to vote and holding voter pledge drives. It is also hoped that the same encouragements would be given to faculty and staff.

Chair Motz asked for a motion to adopt these recommendations. **Commissioner Howe** made a motion, and **Commissioner Robinson** seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

Chair Motz asked that a motion be made for Acting Secretary Rai to send a letter to the institutions reminding them of their legal obligations to support the student right to vote and to report back regarding their efforts to promote civic engagement. **Commissioner Howe** made a motion, and **Commissioner Robinson** seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

Chair's Remarks

Chair Motz congratulated Commissioners Burnim, Dukes, Wormack, and Robinson upon their recent confirmation by the Senate. Dr. Rai's hearing before the Executive Nominations Commission will take place on March 4. Chair Motz is currently in Annapolis where she will be

testifying on Senate Bill 1022 Maryland Higher Education Commission – Academic Program Approval and Institutional Mission Statements – Requirements. Yesterday, she testified on the House cross-file, HB 1244.

Commission Minutes Approval

There was a motion by **Commissioner Howe** and a second by **Vice Chair Aguh** for the approval of the November 15, 2023 meeting minutes. The motion was approved unanimously.

Acting Secretary's Remarks

Acting Secretary Rai also congratulated the Commissioners who were recently confirmed. He also remarked that he was looking forward to his hearing before the Executive Nominations Committee. This week, the team has been busy in Annapolis with the legislative session, attending budget hearings and monitoring bills that will have an impact on our agency.

Department of Finance and Administration – Update on MHEC Relocation– Information Item

Chair Motz recognized Mr. Geoffrey Newman, Assistant Secretary for Finance and Administration, to present this item. Mr. Newman reported that MHEC will be moving to another location in Baltimore City in several months. We are currently spread out across 3 different floors. In the new location, all staff will be together on one floor. MHEC was moved to its current location 12 years ago. We have since required more space, as our programming expanded and our staff grew. The Commissioners asked questions of Mr. Newman.

Department of Finance and Administration – Office of Student Financial Assistance – FAFSA Updates – Information Item

Chair Motz recognized Mr. Al Dorsett, Director of the Office of Student Financial Assistance, to share FAFSA updates. Mr. Dorsett reported that there continues to be challenges with the new FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) form. Initially, there was the delayed release of the new form. Then, the U. S. Department of Education recently shared that student information from the completed FAFSAs will not be available until March (much later than usual). There is now an issue experienced by students whose parents do not have Social Security numbers (even if the students themselves have Social Security numbers). Their applications are considered incomplete. Although there have been attempts to work around this issue, there are still challenges. Mr. Dorsett reported that the priority filing date has been pushed to May 15 (from March 15), as a result. The first round of awarding will take place sometime in June. Additionally, the new MHEC One-App (for students who are ineligible to complete the FAFSA) is now available, and students have been completing it. The Commissioners asked questions about Mr. Dorsett's presentation.

Department of Academic Affairs – Update on SB 1022 / HB 1244 Maryland Higher Education Commission – Academic Program Approval and Institutional Mission Statements – Requirements – Information Item

Chair Motz recognized Dr. Emily Dow, Assistant Secretary for Academic Affairs, to present this item. Dr. Dow gave an overview of both bills, the contents of which reflect the recommendations of the Program Approval Process Workgroup. The recommendations include updating the State Plan, collaboration with the Departments of Labor and Commerce, and defining "substantial modification", among others. Acting Secretary Rai has provided a letter of support, and both he and Chair Motz are testifying on both bills. MHEC is offering two friendly, technical amendments, and they have already started working to implement these recommendations. The Commissioners asked questions about Dr. Dow's presentation.

Post-2025 Completion Goal Development: Progress Update – Information Item

Chair Motz recognized Dr. Dow to present this item. MHEC is currently preparing a survey to send out to various stakeholder groups to help inform the new completion goal. The questions will be focused on the areas of: equity, meaningful credentials, production vs. population goals, industry-specific goals, and research goals. The Commissioners asked questions about Dr. Dow's presentation.

Vice Chair Aguh proposed forming a new committee of the Commission for the purpose of working on the State Plan and the completion goal. Principal Counsel Kimberly Ward suggested placing this on the agenda for the next Commission meeting. **Commissioner Howe** motioned to place this item (discussion about creating a new committee) on the agenda at the next meeting. **Vice Chair Aguh** seconded the motion. There was no vote on the motion.

Adjournment

Commissioner Howe made a motion to adjourn the meeting, and **Vice Chair Aguh** seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at approximately 11:34 AM.

Approved by the Commission:

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Catherine J. "Cassie" Motz, Chair

Maryland Higher Education Commission
Meeting Minutes

March 20, 2024
10:00 a.m.

The Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) met on Wednesday, March 20, 2024 in the 7th floor boardroom in the Nancy S. Grasmick State Education Building (200 West Baltimore Street, Baltimore, MD 21201). The meeting was also livestreamed (and recorded), and some Commissioners joined virtually.

Commission members present:

Catherine J. "Cassie" Motz, Chair	Barbara Kerr Howe
Chike Aguh, Vice Chair	Rebecca Taber Staehelin
Mickey L. Burnim, Ph.D.	Sheila D. Thompson, Ph.D.
Charlene Mickens Dukes, Ed.D.	Craig A. Williams, Ph.D.

Commissioners absent:

Ray Serrrano, Ph.D.	Cierra M. Robinson, Student Commissioner
Janet E. Wormack, Ed.D.	

Staff members present:

Sanjay Rai, Ph.D.	Emily A. A. Dow, Ph.D.
Anthony Reiner	Soma Kedia
Geoffrey Newman	Kimberly Smith Ward
Derrick Coley	Rhonda Wardlaw
Yuxin Lin, Ph.D.	Barbara Schmertz, Ph.D.
Al Dorsett	Deborah Ing
Trish Gordon McCown	

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by **Chair Motz** at approximately 10:00 a.m. A meeting quorum was established with six (6) out of eleven (11) members present. Two other members joined later in the meeting.

Chair's Remarks

Chair Motz welcomed and thanked everyone for attending today's meeting. She congratulated Dr. Sanjay Rai upon his official confirmation by the Maryland Senate as the Secretary of Higher Education. She acknowledged that it had been a challenging time all around, both in Annapolis and at the office, and she thanked everyone for their efforts and their work.

Secretary's Remarks

Secretary Rai congratulated Commissioner Burnim upon the publication of his new book on the topic of leadership. MHEC has been especially busy during this legislative session, attending budget hearings and tracking legislation that will impact the agency.

Public Comments

There were no public comments.

Commission Minutes Approval

There was a motion by **Commissioner Howe** and a second by **Vice Chair Aguh** for the approval of the December 6, 2023 meeting minutes. The motion was approved unanimously.

Department of Finance and Administration – Office of Student Financial Assistance – Financial Aid Update – Information Item

Chair Motz recognized Mr. Al Dorsett, Director of the Office of Student Financial Assistance, who reported on the challenges experienced by the agency due to the recent FAFSA changes. The U. S. Department of Education has begun transmitting small batches of FAFSA information to schools and state agencies. They hope to ramp up delivery in the coming weeks. MHEC aims to process awards as quickly as possible for students who have been timely in submitting their FAFSAs in an effort to provide a clear financial aid award picture for families to make decisions. MHEC's proposed timelines are dependent on the U. S. Department of Education's timelines, so they are subject to change. The Commissioners asked questions about Mr. Dorsett's presentation.

Department of Academic Affairs – Faith Theological Seminary of Catonsville, Approval of Stage One Application – Information Item

Chair Motz recognized Ms. Trish Gordon McCown, Director of Academic Affairs, to present this item. The Maryland Higher Education Commission has reviewed a Stage One initial application for a Certificate of Approval as an in-state, degree-granting institution submitted by Faith Theological Seminary of Catonsville ("FTSC"). The application includes a proposal to offer several degree programs.

FTSC serves adults in the greater Baltimore-Washington community and teaches the Protestant theology. The programs offered at FTSC would address the needs of providing diversity in religious education that is affordable with flexible course options for students (both in-person and online).

Pastor Jerry Harmon, President, was informed on January 3, 2024, that FTSC is approved to proceed to Stage Two of the application process. This decision was based on an analysis of the application in conjunction with the Maryland Higher Education Commission's Minimum

Requirements for In-State, Degree-Granting Institutions, the Maryland State Plan for Postsecondary Education, and a 30-day review by the Maryland higher education community. No comments or objections were received during the 30-day circulation period.

FTSC is expected to submit a Stage 2 Application in the coming months. If the Secretary is satisfied with the documentation submitted by FTSC, an Evaluation Team will conduct an on-site visit to ensure that the institution complies with regulatory standards. The Evaluation Team will include at least 1 member affiliated with an out-of-state institution.

If, based on the Evaluation Team report and other available information, the Secretary is satisfied that FTSC is in compliance with COMAR and the minimum requirements are met, the Secretary shall grant approval to operate, which may include specific conditions. If the Secretary is not satisfied that a prospective in-state institution is in compliance with this chapter, the Secretary shall issue a notice of deficiencies and deny approval. If approved, a 2nd Evaluation Team will conduct an on-site visit at the end of FTSC's first instructional year to ensure that the institution is in compliance with COMAR and any other conditions for FTSC's approval to operate.

Currently, Faith Theological Seminary-Catonsville is authorized to operate under a religious exemption. The designation allows the entity to grant religious discipline degrees without a certificate of approval from the Commission. Additionally, Faith Theological Seminary-Catonsville is a separate entity from Faith Theological Seminary (FTS). FTS ceased operations in 2020 due to the loss of accreditation from Transnational Association of Christian Colleges and Schools (TRACS); MHEC withdrew FTS's authority to operate in Maryland on May 21, 2020. There was interest from Grace Bible Baptist Church to continue the FTS educational offerings. FTSC applied for and was granted authority to operate under a religious exemption in July 2021. Per the regulatory process, FTSC is now seeking to operate as a degree-granting institution. The Commissioners asked questions of Ms. Gordon McCown.

Department of Academic Affairs – Office of Research and Policy Analysis – Background for 2024 Performance Accountability Report – Information Item

Chair Motz recognized Dr. Barbara Schmertz, Director of the Office of Research and Policy Analysis, who provided background information regarding the reporting requirements for the Performance Accountability Report (PAR). Institutions must submit a narrative report of 6-7 pages. Narrative reports accompany benchmarks, indicators, and measures. Commissioners may also request responses to 1-3 questions tied to their interests. They may choose one of three options:
- Option 1 – MHEC staff proceed with no tailored prompts for this reporting year.
- Option 2 – Commissioners hold an open discussion and suggest prompts.
- Option 3 – Commissioners discuss with Secretary Rai and defer to Secretary Rai on preparing the prompts.

There will be a follow-up discussion at the April Commission meeting to determine the reporting prompts for the PAR guidelines.

Commissioner Howe motioned to adopt Option 3 where the Commissioners discuss with Secretary Rai and defer to Secretary Rai on preparing the prompts. **Commissioner Burnim** seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

SHEEO Non-Credit Academy and Steering Committee – Information Item

Chair Motz recognized Dr. Emily Dow, Assistant Secretary for Academic Affairs, to present this item. Dr. Dow reported that Maryland was one of five states chosen by SHEEO (State Higher Education Executive Officers Association) to participate in a 2-year Non-Credit Academy. This initiative will help advance our existing work in non-credit workforce data collection. MHEC is looking for a Commissioner to participate in the Steering Committee. The Commissioner who volunteers will be leading the agency and state in this initiative, participating in a series of meetings. **Commissioner Aguh** volunteered to participate in the Steering Committee.

MDRC-Supported Advising Initiative with Community Colleges – Information Item

Secretary Rai reported that MDRC approached MHEC about a potential opportunity to expand existing, evidence-based, advising models that will eliminate inequities in college completion. Three community colleges will be chosen to participate in this initiative.

Planning for Statewide Success Summit – Fall 2024 – Information Item

Chair Motz reported that she and Commissioner Wormack attended USM's recent student success summit at Bowie State University. She would like MHEC to plan a similar summit sometime this fall. **Chair Motz** asked the Commissioners to volunteer to assist. **Commissioners Dukes and Thompson** expressed interest in helping out.

Adjournment

Commissioner Howe made a motion to adjourn the meeting, and **Vice Chair Aguh** seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at approximately 11:38 AM.

Approved by the Commission:

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Catherine J. "Cassie" Motz, Chair

MEMORANDUM

DATE: June 26, 2024

TO: Maryland Higher Education Commission

FROM: Alexis Faison, Chair, Student Advisory Council

SUBJECT: Student Advisory Council 2023-24 Annual Report

2023-2024 Meeting Dates and Discussion Topics

September 16, 2023	Welcome and Introductions
September 30, 2023	Elections and Planning
October 21, 2023	Gun violence and active threats to campus communities; Voting and Civic Engagement
November 18, 2023	Voting and Civic Engagement; Repercussions of the Pandemic; Update on Mental Health Advisory Committee
December 2, 2023	Food Insecurity –Hunger Free Campus and Expanding SNAP Benefits; Update on the Implementation of the Hunger Free Campus initiative
January 20, 2024	Legislative introduction; Voting and Civic Engagement Recommendation
January 27, 2024	Supporting Non-native English Speaking Students (bring-a-buddy meeting); Voting and Civic Engagement Recommendation
April 20, 2024	Legislative Review
May 11, 2024	Annual Report

2023-2024 Leadership

Alexis Faison (Loyola University Maryland), Chair
Stephen Hook (Washington College), Vice Chair
Helen Felbek (St. John's College), Secretary
Emily Dow (Assistant Secretary for Academic Affairs, MHEC), Staff Liaison

2023-2024 Membership and Attendance

Institution with Representation[1]	Representative	9/16	9/30	10/21	11/18	12/2	1/20	1/27	4/20	5/11	6/1
Anne Arundel Community College	Rabiyatou Bah	X		X			X	X	X		
Bowie State University	Nianna Perkins										
Carroll Community College	Sumiya Rahaman**		X		X	X			X	X	X
College of Southern Maryland	Genesis Ingal**	X	X		X	X			X	X	
Coppin State University	Mykayla Davis	X									
Frostburg State University	Rachael Michalski			X		X	X	X	X		
Harford Community College	David Jones**	X	X			X	X	X	X	X	
Loyola University Maryland	Alexis Faison	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Morgan State University	Tanya Johnson	X	X		X	X	X	X			X
Notre Dame of Maryland University	Emma Alascia	X									
Prince George's Community College	Sadichhya Shahi; Aladdin Glasco	X									
Salisbury University	Luke Zolenski**	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
St. John's College	Helen Felbek**	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
University of Baltimore	Frank Vermeiren**	X	X		X	X	X		X	X	X
University of Maryland Eastern Shore	Lydia Teclar	X			X			X	X		
University of Maryland, Baltimore County	Musa Jafri	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Washington College	Stephen Hook	X	X	X	X			X	X	X	X
Wor-Wic Community College	Mia Foster	X									
Student Commissioner	Cierra Robinson (Morgan State University)	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	

Accomplishments and Recommendations

1. Voting and Civic Engagement: Council members had several robust discussions regarding civic engagement. The Council recognized the importance of preparing and presenting recommendations to the Commission to provide sufficient time to implement the recommendations. The Chair presented an initial recommendation to the Commission on December 6, 2023 and Council representatives revised the recommendation. The

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[1] Institutions without representation: Allegany College of Maryland; Baltimore City Community College; Capitol Technology University; Chesapeake College; Community College of Baltimore County; Frederick Community College; Garrett College; Goucher College; Hagerstown Community College; Hood College; Howard Community College; Johns Hopkins University; Maryland Institute College of Art; Maryland University of Integrative Health; McDaniel College; Montgomery College; Mount St. Mary's University; St. Mary's College of Maryland; Stevenson University; Towson University; University of Maryland Baltimore; University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science; University of Maryland Global Campus; University of Maryland, College Park; Washington Adventist University

Chair presented the revised recommendation to the Commission on February 28, 2024.[2] The final recommendation states:

As the representatives of the Maryland student voice to the Commission, we recognize the plethora of existing efforts to engage students and young adults to vote. We also recognize that, as an advisory council to the Commission, it is important to ensure these efforts are sustained throughout Maryland. We recognize that these efforts empower students to be active participants in the civic process of elections. Therefore, the Student Advisory Council recommends that the Commission and the Secretary of Higher Education recognize, lift up, and continue to support the existing efforts – both through campus-based efforts and through existing organizations – that intend to increase civic participation among college students and reduce barriers that obstruct students from voting, such as:
- *providing resources and supports to students to participate as Election Judges;*
- *providing accommodations and resources to out-of-state students;*
- *reviewing the 2024 – 25 academic calendar (and 2026-27 and 2028-29) and make appropriate amendments/guidance to participate in the voting process1;*
- *and, generally encouraging students to participate in our nations democratic process (e.g., registering to vote, using campus space as polling places, etc.; see specific timeline below).*

The Council requests that the staff liaison provide an update to the Council at the September 2024 meeting on communication with presidents and initiatives on campuses.

The Council continues to emphasize the importance of providing students the opportunity to engage in the democratic process and requested that institutions support students in relevant initiatives.

The Council recommends that the 2024-25 Council hold a discussion regarding civic engagement initiatives after the November 2024 election and consider additional recommendations that encourage student participation in the democratic process.

2. Repercussions of the Pandemic: The Council discussed the various repercussions of the Covid-19 pandemic. The Council recognized a perceived lack of Maryland-specific data and studies on the repercussions of the pandemic specific to the higher education community. Thus, the conversation was mostly based on personal campus-specific experiences. Students identified four main areas of interest: medical, economic, academic, and social repercussions, highlighted below. The Council recommends that a formal recommendation on next steps be prepared by the 2024-25 Council.

Medical and Health Considerations
- The Council acknowledges that special considerations should be given to immunocompromised students.

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[2] February 28, 2024 Recommendation Memo:
https://mhec.maryland.gov/About/SiteAssets/Lists/Meeting%20Agendas%20and%20Agenda%20Books/EditForm/CBook2-28-2024.pdf

- The Council believes that free COVID-19 rapid testing kits should be made available and accessible to students.
- The Council encourages vaccination and booster shot initiatives on campus organized by the student health centers to reduce barriers to students receiving vaccinations (e.g., financial incentives, such as raffles, gift cards, and prizes).
- The Council recognizes that specific mental health supports may be needed, for example, supports to process the trauma and grief in relation to the pandemic.

Economic Considerations
- Council representatives discussed the need for specific financial aid, scholarships, and grants for students whose learning and progress to degree was impacted by the pandemic.

Academic Considerations
- The Council recognizes that institutional policies need to be updates to support students when they are sick (e.g., institutional policies, not variable by course/instructor/department, on excused absences; faculty and resource supports to provide hybrid instruction, etc.).
- Council members discussed the challenges in academic preparedness for incoming students whose high school learning was impacted by the pandemic; students in these cohorts may need additional support to be prepared for college-level academic content and adjust to academic expectations.
- The Council recognizes the importance of access to a stable internet connection for the increase in online/remote instruction.

Social Considerations
- The Council notes that there has been shift away in camaraderie and traditions that existed before the pandemic. The Council discussed the need for new traditions and reflection on supports for student to develop rapport.
- The Council discussed the idea of students reconnecting with communities in new ways (e.g., online opportunities) and ensuring that student leadership leverage new technologies to created "connectedness" among students.
- While online interactions can be useful, Council members recognizes the need for a physical campus. Social interactions in person and on campus are important to development and can counter the negative mental health impacts of isolation. The Council notes the importance of having a physical space to convene.
- The Council acknowledged that campuses are rebuilding and it is a slow process. The Council appreciates the efforts campuses have made to create renewed communities among students.

3. Food Insecurity –Hunger Free Campus and Expanding SNAP Benefits: The Council discussed Food Insecurity on Maryland campuses, acknowledging the positive effects of the Hunger Free Campus initiative. A particular focus was the efforts to expand Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits to students. Council

members discussed the 2023[3] and 2024[4] legislation that would have expanded SNAP Benefits to include eligibility to students enrolled in higher education. The Council notes that HB0407 from the 2024 legislative session did not pass which makes campus-specific initiatives so much more relevant. The Council is interested in continuing a discussion of what campuses can do to support students with food insecurity (e.g., food pantries, ability to use SNAP at campus dining halls, etc.). Additionally, the Council is interested in learning more about the intersection of eligibility of federal financial aid with eligibility for SNAP benefits.

The Council recommends that the Maryland Higher Education Commission prepare an inventory of current initiatives that address food insecurities. The inventory should reflect the use of these resources, awareness and eligibility of using these resources (e.g., eligibility for SNAP, and barriers to using these resources).

The Council recommends that the staff liaison provide an update on Hungry Free Campus initiative at the September meeting for the 2024-25 Council to consider recommendations for improved implementation.

4. <u>Supporting Non-native English Speaking Students</u>[5]: The Council invited non-native speakers to join the discussion about supporting non-native English-speaking students. Guests shared their experiences and the Council discussed the need for revisions to existing academic support structures that can better accommodate the needs of non-native English speaking students. The Council acknowledges the additional need for non-academic assistance. This topic led to a broader discussion about how campuses can create welcoming communities, including the importance of language departments and cross-cultural exchange.

   The Council also notes the recent passage of the CALL Act. The Council recommends that the staff liaison provide an update on the implementation of the CALL Act at the November 2024 meeting. The Council remains available to advise on implementation and how to best support students.

5. <u>Incarcerated Individuals/Maryland Corrections Enterprise</u>: Council members did not discuss this topic at length; however, the Council did discuss the recent passage of the REAP Act. The Council recommends that this be a topic for discussion at the 2024-25 meetings. The Council suggests inviting a speaker from the Maryland Correctional Enterprises to inform the Council on practices regarding employment for individuals who are incarcerated. The Council will discuss and consider recommendations after that presentation. Additionally, the Council suggests the liaison provide an update on the expansion of the Pell Grant to incarcerated individuals.

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[3] HB452 (2023): https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/mgawebsite/Legislation/Details/hb0452?ys=2023RS
[4] HB1027 (2022): https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/mgawebsite/Legislation/Details/hb1027?ys=2022RS
[5] The Council recognizes that there are several terms to describe this population: Second language English speakers; international speakers; multilingual speakers; multilingual speakers/learners; etc. The U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Justice use the term "English learners" (https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/dcl-factsheet-el-students-201501.pdf)

Planning for Next Year

The Council makes the following recommendations for the 2024-2025 Council:

1. Discuss this annual report (2023-2024) during the first planning meeting of 2024-2025 to inform new Council members of previous accomplishments and goals they may consider for the planning of their academic year.
2. Consider at-least one hybrid, in-person meeting to encourage cohesion, collaboration, and community-building among the Council, while remaining sensitive to the accessibility of the meetings to all members.
3. Receive an update from the liaison on civic engagement and responses from campuses on current initiatives and compliance with Maryland law.
4. Receive an update from the liaison on Hungry Free Campus initiative for Council representatives to consider recommendations for improved implementation.
5. Receive an update from the liaison on the how the Commission has supported students with completing the FAFSA in light of the recent federal changes, including how the MSFA and Pell Grant may impact student access to financial aid.
6. Prepare a formal recommendation regarding the repercussions of the Covid-19 pandemic. The recommendation may reflect the medical, economic, academic, and social repercussions, as noted earlier in this document.
7. Invite a speaker from Maryland Correctional Enterprises to inform the Council on practices regarding employment for individuals who are incarcerated.
8. Receive an update from the liaison on the implementation of the REAP Act and the expansion of the Pell Grant to incarcerated individuals.
9. Emphasize the importance of consistent, active participation by all Council members. And, emphasize the importance of connecting with advisory councils (such as the mental health advisory council), and other student leaders. Continually strive to involve institutions that are inactive to increase the breadth of advocacy achieved through the Council.

2024-2025 Meeting Dates (Saturday, 10am-12pm, virtual)

September 7, 2024 (Welcome & introductions)
September 21, 2024 (Elections & topic planning)
October 5, 2024
October 26, 2024
November 16, 2024
December 14, 2024
January 11, 2025
January 25, 2025
April 19, 2025
May 3, 2025

Wes Moore
Governor

Aruna Miller
Lt. Governor

Cassie Motz
Chair

Sanjay Rai, Ph.D.
Secretary

MEMORANDUM

DATE: June 26, 2024

TO: Maryland Higher Education Commission

FROM: Patricia Westerman, PhD, Chair, Faculty Advisory Council

SUBJECT: Faculty Advisory Council 2023-24 Annual Report

Introduction

The Faculty Advisory Council ("the Council") is established under Education Article §11-106. The Council is expected to advise the Maryland Higher Education Commission ("the Commission") and the Secretary of Higher Education ("the Secretary") in the development and implementation of policies affecting higher education in Maryland and advise the Commission and the Secretary on matters of concern to faculty in Maryland.

The Council is comprised of full-time faculty[1] from each higher education institution that has its headquarters and primary campus in Maryland. A current roster of representatives is provided at the end of this report.

The Council meets monthly throughout the academic year (a meeting schedule is provided at the end of this report) to discuss a variety of topics, share relevant campus-based information, highlight best practices, and consider recommendations. A summary of the topics discussed and relevant recommendations from the 2023-24 academic year are provided below.

Active Assailant and Campus Safety

In light of the events at Morgan and Bowie during the Fall 2023 semester, the council representatives felt it important and timely to discuss campus safety policies and procedures. Maryland law requires annually "…each public institution of higher education shall complete at least one active shooter drill (Education Article §15–123)."

The Council discussed campus safety concerns over several meetings and reported on the training they are aware of at their institutions. Campuses vary in the training provided to faculty and the larger campus community. For example, sometimes the trainings are limited to campus safety personnel and may not include faculty. Other times, trainings are specific to the needs of

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[1] (as defined in COMAR 13B.02.02.03)

faculty, such as ensuring a safe classroom should there be an active assailant on campus. Council representatives vary on their individual knowledge of campus protocol should there be a safety issue while they are on campus (e.g., calling 911 before or after calling campus safety).

In light of these discussions, the Council offers the following recommendations:

- Expand faculty professional development to include campus safety topics (e.g., at the time of onboarding for new faculty; devoted training for adjunct faculty). Ensure faculty are aware of campus safety protocols.
- Include faculty in existing training opportunities and/or have stand-alone training for faculty. When drills are performed, faculty (or faculty representatives, such as department chairs) should be invited to attend, participate, or observe.
- Create or expand avenues/mechanisms for faculty to share concerns regarding safety on campus.
- Ensure there is access to mental health resources and other debriefing opportunities after a campus safety incident occurs.

Artificial Intelligence (AI)

The use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has proliferated significantly in the past 18 months and higher education is no exception. AI is the theory and development of computer systems able to perform tasks that normally require human intelligence, such as visual perception, speech recognition, decision-making, and translation between languages. Most AI uses specific machine learning algorithms to create content. Some examples of AI are:

- Gamma AI: this tool can help create PowerPoint presentations, handouts, and other educational materials for use in the classroom
- ChatGPT: this tool can generate human-like dialogue based on user input
- Hello History: this tool allows users to chat with a famous historical figure
- Natural Reader: this tool will dictate a written document to the user
- Imagine Art: this tool will create art based on the descriptions a user enters

Council representatives had several discussions regarding the use AI in higher education, both in terms of educational utility and research utility. The discussions can be summarized into 3 themes: institutional policies, discipline-specific issues, and faculty training.

Institutional Policies
Council representatives discussed specific plagiarism and academic dishonesty policies that address the use of AI. There is variability between and within campuses on using language that specifically addresses AI in the context of plagiarism and academic dishonesty. For example, some campuses have now incorporated language in course catalogs that are institution-wide while other campuses have allowed individual schools, departments, or courses to provide appropriate flexibility as AI becomes more prevalent in the workforce.

Discipline-specific Approaches

On that note, Council representatives discussed the importance of teaching students how to use and engage with AI as a means of "information literacy" and a digital learning and production tool. Council representatives note that it is important to teach students the distinction of ethical and non-ethical uses of AI.

Faculty Training
Council representatives discussed the variability between campuses on professional development opportunities for faculty. Some institutions have institution-wide "task forces" that aim to create and revise appropriate policies related to AI. Other institutions have provided information and training sessions covering the use of AI in the classroom.

Additionally, there was a panel presentation and discussion at the December meeting titled "Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Higher Education: Managing and Leveraging AI for Teaching and Learning." Panel presenters (non-Council members) included:

- Lethia Jackson (Professor, Technology & Security, Bowie State University)
- Stephanie Dashiell (Professor, English; Academic Coordinator of Developmental English, Prince George's Community College)
- Kelly Elkins, Professor (Chemistry, Towson University)

The panel discussion centered on the topics listed above. Additionally, the panel discussion highlighted some of the ethical issues that exist in AI. For example, there are significant concerns about what data (and about whom) AI uses to generate information. Similarly, there are ethical issues about AI's use and dissemination of copyrighted work. Attributing new work is important when that becomes part of the public domain upon which AI can draw. Moreover, the panel discussion noted that exposing more students to the technology and understanding how it works is important to address the digital divide in higher education. In a democratic approach, students and teachers should work together to identify code and algorithms that are representative. Students need to be included in the conversations.

In light of these discussions, the Council offers the following recommendations:

- Create a statewide repository of resources hosted on the Commission's website.
- Increase faculty training specific to (a) AI and IRB-related research and (b) AI and its connection to research/grant writing for faculty.
- Coordinate training and professional development efforts regarding teaching with AI with the University System of Maryland's Kirwan Center for Academic Innovation (e.g., professional development opportunities[2], curricular and pedagogical development, the use of AI for student assessment, etc).

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[2] Incorporating Generative AI into Learning Experiences Virtual Showcase (April 26, 2024): https://www.usmd.edu/cai/incorporating-generative-ai-learning-experiences-virtual-showcase

Use of Student Course Evaluations

The Council spent time discussing the various uses of student course evaluations (SETs) to assess teaching performance, which may impact hiring, rehiring, promotion, and tenure opportunities. A presentation, policy brief (developed by a sub-group of Council members; the policy brief is included at the end of this report), and discussion highlights the biases and inaccuracies that can come from SETs. These biases disproportionately affect women and historically excluded groups, and can contribute to pay gaps. Moreover, with the shift to digital SETs, response rates from students have declined leading to incomplete and potentially skewed data. Finally, SETs have been found to be an unreliable metric for assessing student learning and, therefore, teaching effectiveness.

The Council generally provides a recommendation that SETs be used for professional development and growth opportunities rather than professional advancement or evaluation. The Council offers the following specific recommendations in an effort to ensure fair and unbiased faculty evaluations, contributing to equitable pay and opportunities for all faculty members:

- SETs should not be the singular or primary metric to evaluate teaching effectiveness, instructional proficiency, or student learning.
- The degree to which SETs are used to evaluate faculty teaching should be explicitly stated within the institution's faculty handbook or similar governing guidelines that describe how hiring, promotion, and compensation decisions are made.
- The Commission, in consultation with community partners and stakeholders, should publish a set of best practices and suggested guidelines for using SETs to minimize potential bias and harm to higher education faculty in Maryland.

Faculty Requirement for Academic Programs

Per COMAR 13B.02.03.11.F[3], an academic program must have at least 50% of the courses taught by full-time faculty, except in circumstances determined by the Secretary. The Council discussed specific considerations in which an academic program may get an exception to this requirement. The Council recognizes the importance of adjunct faculty, particularly adjunct faculty who are active in the appropriate workforce domain. At the same time, the Council recognizes the importance of maintaining high-quality academic rigor for the benefit of students and ensuring students have regular access to faculty. Regardless of the proportion of full-time to adjunct faculty, the Council prioritizes that the program must maintain high-quality education and ensure that the program can flourish with appropriate faculty expertise and experience.

The Council does not provide an explicit recommendation on this topic. However, there is general consensus that (a) the current regulation is appropriate and that (b) the following be factors to consider when an exemption is requested:

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[3] COMAR 13B. 02.03.11.F: "Adjunct and part-time faculty are an important and necessary component of some programs. Except in circumstances to be determined by the Secretary, at least 50 percent of the total semester credit hours within the proposed program shall be taught by full-time faculty."

- The type of program (i.e., undergraduate v graduate; e.g., an undergraduate program without full-time faculty may disadvantage students academically)
- The motivation for requesting an exemption (e.g., the salaries for adjunct faculty is often significantly lower than full-time faculty - this should not be a motivation for making the request for exemption)
- Access to advising services (e.g., programs that predominately have adjunct faculty as advisors may impact students academically)
- Assurance that the program will be managed by a full-time faculty or staff member
- Length of exception
  - New programs may need an exception as they work to hire full-time faculty
  - Potential trial period with Commission oversight
- Demonstration of academic program coherence and community
  - Adjunct faculty, due to the part-time nature of teaching, may not be as connected to the day-to-day institutional community opportunities
  - Ensuring all program faculty will participate in curriculum design and revisions

Time outside the Classroom

The Council discussed the variability in expectations of students' time outside of the classroom to be successful in any given course (e.g., time reading materials in preparation for a class, completing homework assignments, studying and preparing for exams and other assessments, preparing written work, etc.). There is variability depending on the discipline and nature of the course (e.g., courses with laboratory curricula; internship or clinical experience courses). Some faculty use a 1-to-1 standard: for every hour spent in the classroom or with an instructor, the student should spend one to two hours doing independent or group work related to the course. Some institutions have departmental, school-wide, or institutional-wide statements related to this topic. No explicit recommendation resulted from this discussion. However, the Council intends to continue this discussion during the 2024-25 academic year.

Course Equivalency Guidance

The Council reviewed the most recent drafted guidance regarding course equivalencies, as it pertains to transfer between public institutions in Maryland. The drafted guidance is now under review by Commission staff.

2023-2024 Meeting Dates

September 19, 2023
October 17, 2023
November 14, 2023
December 12, 2023
January 16, 2024

February 6, 2024
April 16, 2024
May 14, 2024
June 4, 2024

2023-2024 Roster and Attendance

Institution	Term ends (June 30)	Representative	9/19	10/17	11/14	12/12	1/16	2/6	4/16	5/14	6/4
Allegany College of Maryland	2026	Melody Gaschler			X						
Anne Arundel Community College	2027	Heidi McLean Frye	X	X	X	X	X		X		
Baltimore City Community College	2026	Laura Pope									
Bowie State University	2026	Diarra Robertson	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	
Carroll Community College	2025	Raza Khan	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Cecil College	2025	Candace Vogelsong	X	X	X		X	X	X		
College of Southern Maryland	2026	George Bedell	X	X		X				X	
Coppin State University	2026	Atma Sahu			X	X	X	X	X	X	
Frederick Community College	2025	Joe Healey (Secretary)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Frostburg State University	2025	Doris Santamaria-Makang		X	X	X	X	X	X		
Harford Community College	2026	Brian Lazarus	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
Howard Community College	2025	Kathy Lilly	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Loyola University Maryland	2027	Raenita Fenner (Chair-Elect)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Montgomery College	2025	Kathryn Klose	X		X		X		X		
Morgan State University	2026	Kimberly Warren		X				X			
Notre Dame of Maryland University	2026	Angelo Letizia	X	X	X		X	X		X	
Prince George's Community College	2026	Annette Savoy	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Salisbury University	2026	Annette Barnes	X		X				X		
St. John's College	2026	Brendan Boyle	X								
St. Mary's College of Maryland	2026	Walter Hill	X	X	X	X					
Stevenson University	2026	Takisha Toler	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	
Towson University	2025	Patricia Westerman (Chair)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
University of Baltimore	2026	Bridal Pearson	X	X			X	X	X	X	
University of Maryland Baltimore	2025	Fadia Shaya		X	X	X		X			

Institution	Year	Name									
University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science	2025	K. Halimeda Killbourne		X	X		X		X	X	
University of Maryland Eastern Shore	2026	William B Talley	X	X							
University of Maryland Global Campus	2026	Mary Crowley-Farrell		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
University of Maryland, Baltimore County	2025	Jane Lincove		X	X	X			X		
University of Maryland, College Park	2025	Doug Roberts	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Wor-Wic Community College	2026	David Mongor-Lizarrabengoa		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Part-time faculty representative (Community College 1)	2026	Kathy Jones (Howard Community College)	X	X	X						

2024-2025 Meeting Dates

August 27, 2024 (Welcome and introductions for new representatives)
September 17, 2024
October 15, 2024
November 19, 2024
December 10, 2024
January 21, 2025
April 15, 2025
May 13, 2025

Recommendation of the MHEC FAC:
Use of Student Course Evaluations in Faculty Evaluation

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The MHEC Faculty Advisory Council (FAC) recommends re-evaluating the use of Student Course Evaluations (SETs) in faculty evaluations due to identified biases and inaccuracies. These biases disproportionately affect women and historically excluded groups and contribute to pay gaps.

1.1 KEY ISSUES

1. **Prevalence of SETs**: An estimated 94.4% of institutions use SETs to assess teaching performance.

2. **Bias in SETs**: Research indicates strong bias in SETs against women and historically excluded groups.

3. **Decreasing Response Rates**: With the shift to digital SETs, response rates have declined, leading to incomplete and potentially skewed data.

4. **Inaccurate Measure of Teaching Effectiveness**: SETs have been found to be an unreliable metric for assessing student learning and, therefore, teaching effectiveness.

1.2 MHEC FAC RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Recommendation I:** SETs should not be the singular or primary metric to evaluate teaching effectiveness, proficiency, or student learning.

2. **Recommendation II:** The degree to which SETs are used to evaluate faculty teaching should be explicitly stated within the institution's faculty handbook or similar governing guidelines that describe how hiring, promotion, and compensation decisions are made.

3. **Recommendation III:** MHEC, in consultation with community partners and stakeholders, should publish a set of best practices and suggested guidelines for using SETs to minimize potential bias and harm to higher education faculty in Maryland.

The recommendations aim to ensure fair and unbiased faculty evaluations, contributing to equitable pay and opportunities for all faculty members.

2 INTRODUCTION

The MHEC FAC has identified a problem with utilizing student course evaluations (SETs) to assess faculty teaching proficiency. SETs are widely used across higher education institutions to gauge course quality and teaching efficacy [1], [2], [3], [4]. According to the 2004 National Center for Education Statistics' National Study of Postsecondary Faculty [5], it is estimated that 94.4% of institutions use SETs as a part of their departmental/school policies to assess the teaching performance of full-time instructional faculty/staff. **Figure 1** shows further data from [5], which shows the estimated percentage of institutions that use SETs to evaluate teaching performance, broken down by Carnegie Classification.
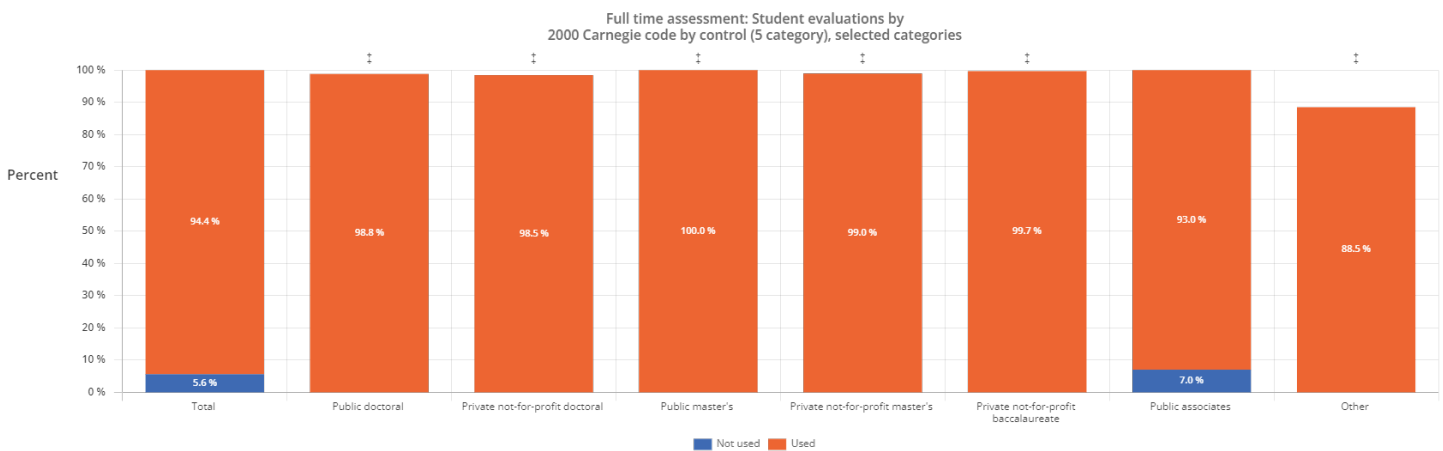
Figure 1: Percent of National Study of Postsecondary Faculty Survey Respondent Institutions that utilize SETs to evaluate full-time faculty. The horizontal axis is broken down by Carnegie classification, and the vertical axis shows the percentage of respondent institutions that use or do not use SETs in full-time faculty evaluation. Approximately 94.4% of the respondent institutions use SETs to evaluate full-time faculty.

However, research has indicated that these evaluations may exhibit bias against women and historically excluded groups. In 2019, the Chronicle of Higher Education published a news article on the American Sociological Association's (ASA) statement, which listed problems with using SETs and "urging colleges not to over-rely on them [6]." The article also states that the American Historical Association, the American Political Science Association, and the National Communication Association endorsed the ASA's statement.

Moreover, with the growing popularity of digital SETs, response rates have dwindled, rendering the data collected from SETs incomplete and fallible. In addition, SETs have been deemed an unreliable metric for assessing student learning and, thus, teaching effectiveness.

Using biased tools to evaluate faculty performance can significantly contribute to the pay gap between females and historically excluded groups. Again, according to the 2004 National Center for Education Statistics' National Study of Postsecondary Faculty [5], female full-time faculty members make an estimated 22.4% less than their male counterparts. **Figure 2** compares the average total income for male and female faculty across different Carnegie classifications; per the figure, the most significant pay differential between males and females is at the doctoral level at $23,379.20 per year. However, there is a $9,862.70 and $9,272.00 annual pay gap between males and females at the master's and baccalaureate levels, respectively.
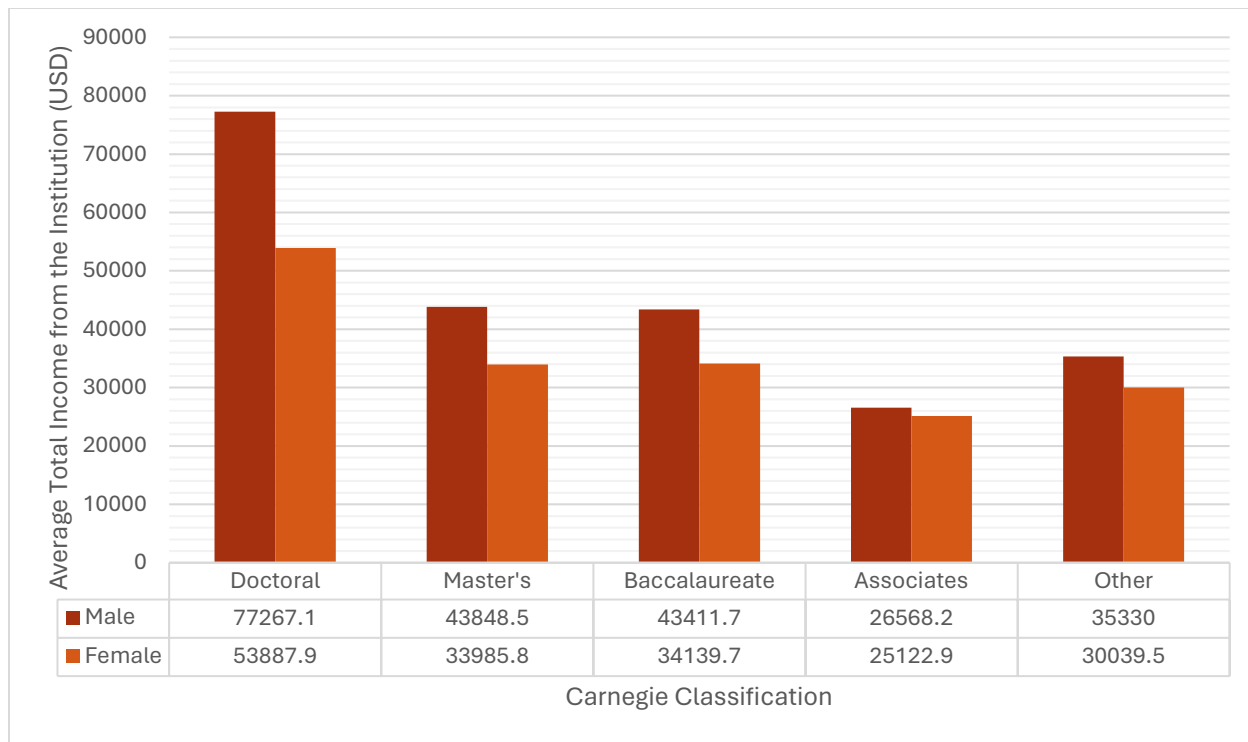
23

Figure 2: *Average Total Income from the Institution for Full-Time Faculty from [5]The data is broken down by Carnegie Classification and faculty gender. The most significant gap in annual pay is at doctoral institutions, while the smallest gap is at the associate's level. Public and private institutions have been consolidated within their respective classifications.*

Similarly, pay gaps exist between males of different races/ethnicities. As per **Figure 3**, Black, American Indian/Alaska Native, and Hispanic White/Hispanic Black males earn on average $8,499.90 less than their Asian/Pacific Islander colleagues and $8,197.40 less annually than their White non-Hispanic colleagues per year.
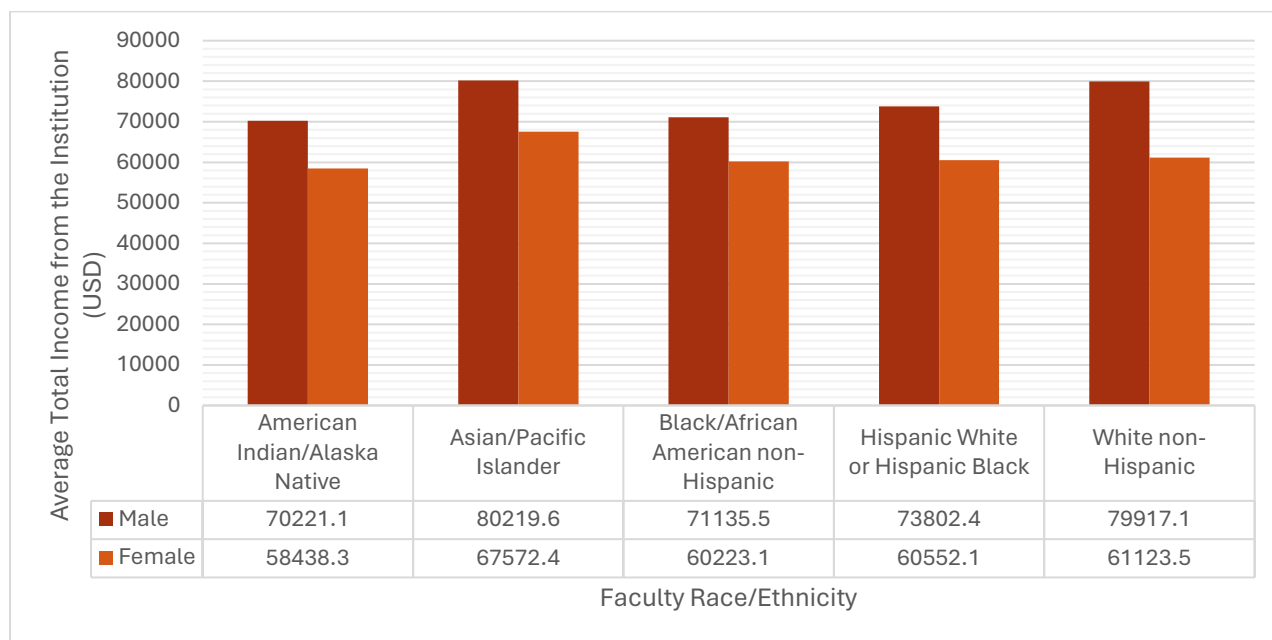

Figure 3: *Average Total Income from the Institution for Full-Time Faculty from [5]. The data is divided by race/ethnicity and then into male and female. On average, Asian/Pacific Islander and White non-Hispanic men make $8,348.65 per year more than their American Indian, Black/African American non-Hispanic, and Hispanic White/Black colleagues.*

Pay gaps are not entirely due to SETs by any measure. For example, Fox-Cadamone lists promotion differentials (i.e., female faculty are less likely to be in full-time positions and are underrepresented in tenure-track positions), career interruptions, worker characteristics (i.e., experience, educational attainment, research productivity, primary teaching field), in addition to institutional discrimination as reasons for the pay gap between men and women in higher education [7]. However, it is well established that SETs often play a substantial role in evaluating faculty for annual pay increases, tenure, and promotion [1], [2], [8], [9]. Pounder cites Seldin [10] that there is an "86% use of student evaluation of teaching (SET) as a central feature of personnel decisions in U.S. higher education [4, p. 178]." Wines and Lau [8] document a specific improper use of SETs in which a finance professor, denoted as Professor F, was denied tenure; Wines and Lau shared an excerpt from Professor F's appeal letter:

> *"In my conversation with [the Provost]... I learned that much of the information in my tenure dossier was discounted by the University P&T Committee because it was not documented by my department. Specifically, I was told that the multiple measures of my teaching effectiveness in my tenure dossier were not given weight in my tenure decision because they had not been specifically discussed by my department. These measures were therefore assumed to be of little significance. [The Provost] stated that this left only my teaching evaluation scores to be given weight by University P&T as an indication of my teaching effectiveness [8, p. 173]."*

Krietzer and Sweet-Cushman summarize that

> *"Essentially, evaluations are shaped by discipline, student interest, class level, class difficulty, class meeting time, and other course-specific characteristics, but not generally actual instructor quality [1, p. 76]."*

If SETs are inherently biased and a significant measure of teaching effectiveness, ***we must acknowledge that they contribute to employment discrimination in higher education***.

As a result, it is crucial to re-evaluate the use of SETs to ensure that faculty evaluations are fair and unbiased, contributing to equitable pay and opportunities for all faculty members.

To protect faculty in higher education in Maryland from potential employment discrimination, the MHEC FAC has formulated the following recommendations regarding SETs to MHEC and the Secretary of Higher Education:

1. **Recommendation I:** SETs should not be the singular or primary metric to evaluate teaching effectiveness, proficiency, or student learning.

2. **Recommendation II:** The degree to which SETs are used to evaluate faculty teaching should be explicitly stated within the institution's faculty handbook or similar governing guidelines that describe how hiring, promotion, and compensation decisions are made.

3. **Recommendation III:** MHEC, in consultation with community partners and stakeholders, should publish a set of best practices and suggested guidelines for using SETs to minimize potential bias and harm to higher education faculty in Maryland.

3 RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 VARIOUS FORMS OF DEMOGRAPHIC BIAS WITHIN SETS
Substantial evidence demonstrates bias in SETs due to instructor and student demographics. Two comprehensive literature studies on SETs have identified several studies that establish bias in the evaluation process. In one of the studies, Kreitzer and Sweet-Cushman [1] analyzed over 100 papers from 1974 to 2020 that utilized different methodological approaches to contextualize measurement and equity bias. The findings consistently showed that women and other marginalized groups face significant biases in the standard evaluation process of teaching.

In the other study, Heffernan [2] analyzed the themes and literature in SETs using a systematic analysis methodology. The literature review contained work from 1990 to 2020. The key findings were that SETs are significantly biased due to the demographics of the students who complete the evaluation, the demographics of the instructor, the subject areas, and other irrelevant factors to the instructor or the course.

While not described in detail here, other factors have been shown to influence SETs, including instructor attractiveness [11], giving out chocolates on evaluation day [12], subject matter/discipline [13], and lower-level courses vs. upper-level courses [14].

3.1.1   Bias Due to Gender and Sexuality:

MacNell, Driscoll, and Hunt 2014 examined gender bias in SETs by "falsifying the gender of assistant instructors in an online course and asking students to evaluate them along a number of instructional criteria [15, p. 6]."

The study was performed at a public, 4-year institution in North Carolina. MacNell et al. concluded that "Regardless of actual gender or performance, students rated the perceived female instructor significantly more harshly than the perceived male instructor, which suggests that a female instructor would have to work harder than a male to receive comparable ratings. If female professors and instructors are continually receiving lower evaluations from their students for no other reason than that they are women, then this particular form of inequality needs to be taken into consideration as women apply for academic jobs and come up for promotion and review [15, p. 11]."

Boring [3], in 2016, performed a natural experiment addressing the research question: To what extent do gender biases influence the way that evaluators assess individual competence?

The study was performed using data at a French university that requires first-year undergraduates to take six mandatory courses, where the university randomly enrolls students into their sections, making the instructor's gender random. SETs are required at the end of the term, and all students take the same final exam.

Performing a statistical analysis on five academic years' worth of SET and final exam performance, Boring found that "a male professor's expected *excellent* overall satisfaction score is approximately 20% higher than a female professor's expected *excellent* overall satisfaction score [16, p. 28]" despite also finding that male and female students performed equally well on the final exam.

Mengel et al. [17] published results from a quasi-experimental dataset of 19,952 evaluations of instructors at Maastricht University in the Netherlands. Like the French university studied by Boring in [16], Maastricht University randomly assigns students to course sections, thereby randomly assigning female or male instructors. The analysis also considered student grades primarily determined by centralized exams and student self-reported effort, i.e., the self-reported number of hours students spent studying for the course.

Mengel et al.'s results show that "female faculty receive systematically lower teaching evaluation than their male colleagues despite the fact that neither students' current or future grades nor their study hours are affected by the gender of the instructor [17, p. 2]." Additionally, Mengel et al. found that the "lower teaching evaluations of female faculty stem mostly from male students, who evaluate their female instructors 21% of a standard deviation worse than their male instructors. While female students were found to rate female instructors about 8% of a standard deviation lower than male instructors [17, p. 2]."

Anderson and Kanner [18] performed "two studies where they examined students' perceptions of lesbian/gay professors, based on information presented to them in a course syllabus [18, p. 1599]." In both studies, Anderson and Kanner found that "there is evidence that students' beliefs about sexual orientation inform their impressions [18, p. 1599]" of the course. More specifically, Anderson and Kanner found that lesbian and gay professors were perceived as "coming to the course with a political agenda, with personal biases, and with the aim of forcing their views of sexuality on students [18, p. 1599]."

Ewing et al. in [19] surveyed students in four introductory psychology courses. The researchers asked students to listen and evaluate a guest lecturer, where the students were provided a curriculum vitae for the lecturer, where the vitae may have included a reference to indicate the lecturer's sexual orientation. Ewing et al. found evidence of

subtle prejudice consistent with analysis from Pettigrew and Meertens in [20] in that prejudice against gay male and lesbian lecturers "might have been exhibited subtly not through explicitly negative evaluations but rather through the denial of deserved positive ratings."

3.1.2   Bias Due to Race

Bavishi et al. [21] explored the challenges professors face due to racial stereotypes held by students even before they meet them. The researchers provided college preparatory students with a CV of a professor belonging to different races (White, Black, or Asian), genders (male or female), and academic disciplines (Science or Humanities). The students evaluated the professors based on their competence, legitimacy, and interpersonal skills. The findings revealed that Black professors were perceived as significantly less competent and legitimate compared to their White and Asian counterparts. Moreover, both Black and Asian professors were judged to have significantly less interpersonal skills than White professors.

Chávez and Mitchell [22] conducted a study during the summer of 2017 at a large state university. They analyzed various studies to examine the impact of SETs on instructors, with particular emphasis on gender and race/ethnicity biases. The study focused on 14 online political science sections of two courses - Introduction to American Government and Introduction to Texas Government - which were mandatory for graduation. Each course section was led by a different faculty member responsible for grading and handling course-related issues. Although the instructors were visible and accessible via various media at the beginning of the course, their interaction with students ended there. It was discovered that despite all course elements being the same, women and faculty of color received lower scores than white men.

Reid [23] examined if SETs contained bias on the race and gender of the instructor. Reid used peer-generated evaluations of teaching obtained from RateMyProfessors.com from the 25 highest-ranked liberal arts colleges in the United States. The analysis revealed that minority faculty, particularly Black and Asian faculty, received lower ratings for overall quality and helpfulness than White faculty.

3.2   SET RESPONSE RATES

Many higher education institutions are now using digital or web-based distribution of SETs. The shift to web-based surveys is primarily driven by practical reasons such as cost savings from reduced paper usage, time saved due to automated data entry, saved class time, increased survey accessibility, and consistency in survey format across in-person and online courses. However, despite these advantages, many institutions are facing the challenge of low response rates, which can lead to statistically insignificant results that fail to represent the complete sentiments of students in the class accurately.

Nulty in [24] summarizes the results of eight studies that compared SET response rates for paper-based surveys versus web-based surveys. Nulty stated that, on average, there was a 23.0% decrease in SET response rates when institutions switched from paper-based to web-based surveys. Additionally, Chapman and Jones state, "Multiple studies reported that while response rates for online SETs initially average near 60%, they soon drop off to the 30 to 40 percent range [25, p. 49]." Chapman and Jones also state that "SETs with low response rates may not be representative of the whole and add to the argument against making instructional changes or personnel decisions based upon such feedback [25, p. 49]."

In addition to the sample bias imparted by low response rates, there may be additional forms of bias due to which students elect to respond and which students elect not to respond. Adams and Umbach [26] found that students with higher grades were more likely to respond and were more likely to give higher ratings. Adams and Umbach also found that students were more likely to respond to SETs associated with their major courses and that repeated survey requests led to survey fatigue and increased likelihood of non-response.

3.3   SETS DO NOT MEASURE TEACHING EFFECTIVENESS

The primary role of SETs is often to measure teaching effectiveness, as merit pay is generally constructed on the basis that the most effective teachers should get better pay and be promoted. However, if SETs do not effectively

measure teaching effectiveness and student learning, using them to determine merit pay, promotion, etc., is inherently flawed. Literature indicates that SETs may not accurately measure teaching effectiveness due to biases, the non-linear nature of the underlying structure, and their poor prediction of future student achievement.

According to Boring et al. [3], SETs are plagued by gender biases against female instructors. Analyzing data from a French university and an online course at a U.S. university, the authors found that this bias persists even when evaluating objective aspects of teaching, like promptness in grading. The degree of bias was found to vary by discipline and student gender and can not be adjusted due to its dependence on multiple factors. The study concluded that SETs are more influenced by students' gender biases and grade expectations than actual teaching effectiveness.

In a study investigating the relationship between SETs and learning outcomes in business courses, Galbraith et al. [27] found no evidence to support the validity of SETs as a general indicator of teaching effectiveness or student learning. The authors observed that the most effective instructors were within the middle percentiles of student course ratings. In contrast, instructors receiving ratings in the top or bottom quantile were associated with significantly lower levels of student achievement.

Clayson [9] concluded that objective measures of learning are unrelated to SETs. His research suggests that the validity of the relationship between learning and SETs is situational and depends on several factors. The author warns that students do not always hold a realistic evaluation of their learning, which can affect SETs' validity.

Carrel and West [28] used a unique U.S. Air Force Academy dataset to examine how professor quality affects student achievement. The authors found that student evaluations positively predict student achievement in contemporaneous courses but are poor predictors of follow-on student achievement. This finding questions the value and accuracy of using student evaluations to measure teaching quality for academic promotion and tenure decisions.

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Wes Moore
Governor

Aruna Miller
Lt. Governor

Cassie Motz
Chair

Sanjay Rai, Ph.D.
Secretary

Maryland Higher Education Commission
2024 Meeting Dates

The Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) is Maryland's higher education coordinating board responsible for the management of statewide financial aid programs and the establishment of statewide policies for public and private colleges and career schools to support students' postsecondary pursuits.

Commission meetings are held on the 4th Wednesday of each month from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., with certain exceptions, as noted below. Meetings in 2024 will be in-person in the 7th Floor Boardroom at the Nancy S. Grasmick State Education Building, 200 West Baltimore Street, Baltimore, MD 21201. Meetings will also be livestreamed.

Scheduled Meeting Dates for 2024

January 24, 2024

February 28, 2024

March 20, 2024
(3rd Wednesday)

April 24, 2024

May 22, 2024

June 26, 2024

July 24, 2024

August 28, 2024

September 18, 2024
(3rd Wednesday)
10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

October 23, 2024

November 20, 2024
(3rd Wednesday)

December 11, 2024
(2nd Wednesday)

Dates, times, and locations are subject to change.
Please check this website for livestream links and the most up-to-date information:
http://www.mhec.maryland.gov/About/Pages/Meetings.aspx