

**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**

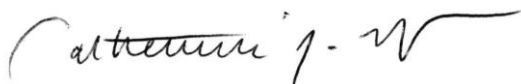
**Chair Motz** recognized Dr. Dow to present this item. MHEC is currently preparing a survey to send out to various stakeholder groups to help inform the new completion goal. The questions will be focused on the areas of: equity, meaningful credentials, production vs. population goals, industry-specific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

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Catherine J. Motz", written in black ink.

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Catherine J. “Cassie” Motz, Chair