

Maryland Higher Education Commission
Meeting Minutes

May 28, 2025
10:00 a.m.

The Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) met on Wednesday, May 28, 2025 in the 15th floor Conference Room at 217 East Redwood Street, Baltimore, MD 21202. Some of the Commissioners attended virtually, and the meeting was live-streamed as well.

Commission members present:

Catherine J. “Cassie” Motz, Chair	Ray Serrano, Ph.D. (left at 11:00 a.m.)
Chike Aguh, Vice Chair	Rebecca Taber Staehelin
Kathleen Bands, Ph.D.	Sheila D. Thompson, Ph.D.
Mickey L. Burnim, Ph.D.	Craig A. Williams, Ph.D.
Barbara Kerr Howe	

Commission members absent:

Charlene Mickens Dukes, Ed.D.	Praise Alayode, Student Commissioner
Janet E. Wormack, Ed.D.	

Staff members present:

Sanjay Rai, Ph.D.	Emily A. A. Dow, Ph.D.
Barbara Schmertz, Ph.D.	Elisabeth Layton
Kristin Clarkson	Kimberly Smith Ward
Al Dorsett	Daniel Schuster
Lyndsay Silva, D.P.A.	Deborah Ing
Derrick Coley	Geoffrey Newman
Yuxin Lin, Ph.D.	Elena Quiroz-Livanis
Tiffany Majors	Parris Jackson

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by **Chair Motz** at approximately 10:05 a.m. A meeting quorum was established with nine (9) out of twelve (12) members present.

Chair’s Remarks

Chair Motz welcomed everyone to today’s meeting and provided an overview of the agenda, including the review meeting that is the first item.

Secretary’s Remarks

Secretary Rai thanked everyone for taking the time to attend the Commission meeting today.

Public Comments

There were no public comments.

Commission Meeting Minutes Approval

Commissioner Burnim made a motion to approve the meeting minutes of April 23, 2025, and **Commissioner Thompson** seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Review Meeting – Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA) Proposal for a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Interior Design

Chair Motz provided an overview of the new process for review meetings. Each school is allowed 15 minutes of uninterrupted time to present their cases. The presidents may designate speakers to present on their behalf. After the first 15 minutes, the Commissioners may ask questions of the institutions and Secretary Rai. The Commission is tasked with evaluating whether or not the program is duplicative, and if the duplication is unreasonable. Unreasonable duplication would cause harm to the state or students attending institutions of higher education. In this case, the Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA) has proposed a Bachelor of Design in Interior Design program to which Morgan State University (MSU) has objected. The Secretary decided in MSU's favor, and MICA has requested that the Commission review the decision of the Secretary.

Chair Motz recognized MICA's President Cecilia McCormick who made some opening remarks. MICA is the oldest independent continuously degree-granting college of art and design in the country. Their mission is to expand access to high quality art and design education.

Dr. Raymond Barclay, Enrollment Vice President and Interim Senior Associate Provost, spoke on the context and history of the program. He remarked that MICA is a specialized fine arts school for art and design, while MSU is a broad research university. There is ample demand in the Maryland and D. C. area. Workforce needs are significant, and there are expected to be over 1,400 openings in the next decade. Even with significant growth, Morgan's degree production cannot meet the State's workforce need on its own. He also outlined the differences between the two programs, which include different formats, target audience, and curricular emphasis.

Chair Motz recognized MSU's Dr. Phyllis Keys, Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs, gave opening remarks on behalf of the President and Provost. She expressed concern that an additional design program in the area would slow the momentum that their program has already gained.

Program Director for Interior Design Suzanne Frasier shared that their program launched in the fall of 2018 due to high demand from students. Since that time, their program has experienced exponential growth. Furthermore, collaboration is an important element of their program, which includes partnerships with local institutions, like Montgomery College and Anne Arundel

Community College. In fact, they are increasing their online course offerings in order to accommodate a greater number of students.

The Commissioners asked clarifying questions of both schools. **Commissioner Burnim** expressed concern that, if implementation was allowed, there would be competition that would hurt MSU's program. President McCormick responded that there was enough demand to accommodate both programs. **Commissioner Burnim** remarked that both programs have a lot to offer, and he would like to see the two schools work together. President McCormick noted that MICA did reach out to MSU to collaborate, but it did not work out at the time.

Commissioner Williams asked Secretary Rai and Dr. Emily Dow, MHEC's Assistant Secretary for Academic Affairs, to summarize their position. Dr. Dow remarked that there is an opportunity for collaboration. The programs are not distinct enough to justify allowing both to operate simultaneously. MSU's program should be given the chance to grow. The key question is if there will be harm to the state, as state funds are used to support the institutions. **Chair Motz** noted that a letter from MICUA (Maryland Independent College and University Association) stated that no state funds (Sellinger) would be used for MICA's program. Dr. Barclay affirmed that their proposed program would not use Sellinger funds.

Commissioner Howe shared that she had two concerns, whether or not state resources would be used and the lack of collaboration. She would like the Commission to consider postponing the vote. President McCormick reiterated that the type of program they are proposing does not fall under Sellinger funding, and that is the only state resource they receive.

After further discussion, a final vote was taken. **Commissioner Burnim** made a motion to affirm the Secretary's decision to not recommend for implementation MICA's proposed Bachelor of Arts degree in Interior Design, and **Commissioner Thompson** seconded the motion. **Chair Motz** called the roll:

Burnim – Affirm

Thompson – Affirm

Aguh – Reverse

Bands – Reverse

Howe – Reverse

Williams – Affirm

Taber Staehelin – Reverse

Motz – Reverse

A total of 5 Commissioners voted to reverse the Secretary's decision, and 3 voted to affirm it. However, the Attorney General's Office issued a letter of opinion in August 2023, which stated that a quorum of appointed Commissioners is needed to reverse the Secretary's decision. There are 12 appointed Commissioners presently, and a quorum is 7 Commissioners. Therefore, the Secretary's decision stands.

Commissioner Williams asked to explain his vote. He shared that if additional information were to come light confirming that state funds would not be used to fund MICA's program, he may reconsider his vote.

Department of Academic Affairs – Approval of Proposed Amendments to COMAR 13B.02.01.12 and COMAR 13B.02.02.16 – Definition of a Credit Hour – Action Item

Chair Motz recognized Dr. Dow who presented proposed amendments to the definition of a credit hour in two sections of COMAR (pertaining to both in-state and out-of-state institutions). Both provisions will be aligned with the federal definition. This change would modernize the regulatory framework for credit hour determination across Maryland's postsecondary institutions and ensure consistency with federal policy, accreditation standards, and evolving instructional delivery models.

Dr. Dow recommended that the Commission:

- (1) Approve for publication in the Maryland Register the proposed regulatory amendments to the definition of a credit hour; and
- (2) Authorize its Assistant Attorney General to make non-substantive edits to the proposed regulations to conform to the stylistic and formatting requirements of AELR and DSD.

Vice Chair Burnim made a motion for approval, and **Commissioner Burnim** seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Department of Academic Affairs – Office of Research and Policy Analysis – Maryland Higher Education Commission Maryland Public Colleges and Universities Enrollment Projections 2025 to 2034 – Action Item

Chair Motz recognized Dr. Barbara Schmertz, Director of the Office of Research and Policy Analysis, who asked Dr. Yuxin Lin, Associate Director of the Office of Research and Policy Analysis, and Mr. Daniel Schuster, Finance Policy Analyst, to present this item. Dr. Lin stated that the Maryland Higher Education Commission produces 10-year enrollment projections for Maryland public colleges and universities, as required by Code of Maryland Regulations. Enrollment projections are produced every year, and they are used by colleges to prepare capital construction projects.

Mr. Schuster explained that having one set of statewide projections that is used by all allows everyone to plan using the same assumptions. The enrollment projections help campuses calculate projected space need. For 4-year schools, the model used continues to be reasonably accurate and moderate increases are expected. For Maryland, population trends are such that the "enrollment cliff" experienced or anticipated elsewhere in the country is not expected to be seen here within the next ten years.

Dr. Lin noted that MHEC's enrollment projections are different from the individual institutions' projections. The projections include headcount projections for each institution, with separate analyses for full- and part-time undergraduates and, as applicable, full- and part-time graduate/professional students. Full-time equivalent (FTE) and full-time day equivalent (FTDE)

projections were calculated by applying a mathematical formula to the headcount figures. Projections have also been developed for state-funding-eligible FTE noncredit continuing educational enrollments at community colleges.

Dr. Lin also discussed the model that she used. The projections model aims to answer the question “How many Marylanders may be enrolled in postsecondary education in ten years?” These projections reflect the potential enrollment in Maryland – the number of students Maryland public institutions need to educate ten years from now – disaggregated by segment, institution, and specific subpopulations.

These projections provide perspective to higher education policy discussions at the state level, including facilities planning, tuition and fees issues, articulation, and funding priorities. The Department of Budget and Management and the General Assembly may use the Commission’s forecasts as the State’s official enrollment projections.

For FY 2025, MHEC enrollment projections forecast that the statewide potential credit enrollment will rise to 318,604 by Fall 2034, a 9.7% increase over 10 years. Public four-year institutions will experience a 6.6% increase in undergraduate enrollment and a 13.1% increase in graduate enrollment, and community colleges are estimated to observe a 12.5% increase in the next 10 years.

Dr. Lin recommended that the Maryland Higher Education Commission accept the 2025-2034 enrollment projections and approve their distribution to the public, the campuses, and interested state agencies. **Vice Chair Aguh** made a motion for approval, and **Commissioner Burnim** seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Adjournment

Vice Chair Aguh made a motion to adjourn the meeting, and **Commissioner Thompson** seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 1:04 p.m.

Approved by the Commission:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Catherine J. Motz", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Catherine J. “Cassie” Motz, Chair