

Maryland Higher Education Commission
Meeting Minutes

October 23, 2024
10:00 a.m.

The Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) met on Wednesday, October 23, 2024 via video teleconference (Google Meet).

Commission members present:

Catherine J. “Cassie” Motz, Chair	Ray Serrano, Ph.D.
Chike Aguh, Vice Chair	Sheila D. Thompson, Ph.D.
Kathleen Bands, Ph.D.	Craig A. Williams, Ph.D.
Mickey L. Burnim, Ph.D.	Janet E. Wormack, Ed.D.
Barbara Kerr Howe	

Commission members absent:

Charlene Mickens Dukes, Ed.D.	Praise Alayode, Student Commissioner
Rebecca Taber Staehelin	

Staff members present:

Sanjay Rai, Ph.D.	Emily A. A. Dow, Ph.D.
Geoffrey Newman	Soma Kedia
Anthony Reiner	Kimberly Smith Ward
Derrick Coley	Daniel Schuster
Victoria Johnson	Deborah Ing
Samuel Durai Pandian	Trish Gordon McCown
Alexandra Nguyen	Alexia Simmons
Allie Edelstein	Alexis Merriman
Bryson Barksdale	Lyndsay Silva, D.P.A.
Cara Martinez	Rose Robinson
Khia Poteat	Shayla Hunter
Kristin Clarkson	Alexandra Chaillou, Ph.D.
Olayta Rigsby	Everette Jackson
Frances Turner	

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by **Chair Motz** at approximately 10:00 a.m. A meeting quorum was established with nine (9) out of twelve (12) members present.

Secretary’s Remarks

Secretary Rai welcomed everyone and shared that he was currently at the University of Maryland with Dr. Emily Dow, Assistant Secretary for Academic Affairs, for a meeting with the Lieutenant Governor on the topic of aerospace industry workforce needs. He then gave an overview of the agenda.

Chair's Remarks

Chair Motz thanked everyone for attending the Commission meeting. She remarked that she looked forward to receiving input on the draft statewide goals from the higher education community. The goals will also be presented at the Student Success Summit on November 14-15 at the Universities at Shady Grove.

Public Comments

Dr. Brad Phillips, Executive Director of the Maryland Association of Community Colleges, remarked that they were in support of the post-2025 goals and appreciated the inclusion of the work of community colleges.

Dr. Alison Wrynn, Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs of the University System of Maryland, shared comments on the draft statewide goals. They were in support of the elimination of equity gaps. Additionally, they felt that the state should continue to seek an attainment goal of at least 55% of an associate's or bachelor's degree. She also noted that the research and development goals were aligned with the work that they do.

Commission Meeting Minutes Approval

Commissioner Burnim made a motion to approve the meeting minutes of August 28, 2024, and **Vice Chair Aguh** seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

Commissioner Howe made a motion to approve the meeting minutes of September 18, 2024, and **Commissioner Burnim** seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

Department of Finance and Administration – Office of Finance Policy – FY 2026 Higher Education State Operating Budget Recommendations – Action Item

Chair Motz recognized Mr. Geoffrey Newman, Assistant Secretary for Finance and Administration, to present this item. Mr. Samuel Durai Pandian, Director of Budget and Administration, assisted in the presentation. The Maryland Higher Education Commission is charged with submitting to the Governor and the General Assembly a consolidated operating budget for higher education. The consolidated budget is to include a recommendation regarding the appropriate level of funding for higher education in order to achieve the goals established in the Maryland State Plan for Postsecondary Education. The State provided over \$3.2 billion in State funds to higher education in fiscal 2025. 73.2 percent was provided to public four-year institutions. The administration budget for MHEC is 1.9 percent of the total. The Commission

received over \$189 million in general fund and special fund support for student financial assistance in fiscal 2025.

Mr. Newman recommended that the Maryland Higher Education Commission adopt the following funding priorities be used in targeting funding for higher education for Fiscal Year 2026:

- Funding to support the Maryland Higher Education Commission General Administration budget as it continues to implement new programs, add new staff, modify existing programs, and examine its operations to increase automation of application and management programs.
- Funding to support new and existing programs of student financial assistance and changes to existing programs brought forward by the Governor and General Assembly as well as to support the development of a new financial aid system.
- Continued support to formula-funded institutions and segments in line with the appropriations provided to the public four-year colleges and universities in accordance with the calculation methodologies provided in statute to the extent possible.
- To the extent possible, provide even funding to each segment of higher education.

The Commissioners asked questions about the presentation. **Commissioner Burnim** made a motion to approve the recommendations, with a revision to the 4th recommendation (“To the extent possible, provide equitable funding among each segment of higher education.”), and **Vice Chair Aguh** seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Department of Finance and Administration – Office of Finance Policy – FY 2026 Consolidated Capital Budget Recommendations – Action Item

Chair Motz recognized Mr. Daniel Schuster, Finance Policy Analyst, to present the FY 2026 Consolidated Capital Budget Recommendations. He shared a PowerPoint presentation. The seven segments of the Consolidated Capital Budget for Higher Education include: (1) the Community College Construction Grant Program; (2) Community College Facilities Renewal Grant Program; (3) Baltimore City Community College; (4) University System of Maryland; (5) Morgan State University; (6) St. Mary’s College of Maryland; and (7) Maryland Independent College & University Association. Their requests total \$605,103,098. Mr. Schuster gave an overview of each submission and made the following recommendations:

- 1) The Commission staff recommends approval of the \$70,000,000 planned in the CIP (Capital Improvement Program) for the Community College Construction Grant Program.
- 2) The Commission staff recommends approval of the Community College Facilities Renewal Grant funding request of \$3,500,000, consistent with statutory formula.
- 3) The Commission staff recommends approval of FY 2026 funding for projects planned in the CIP for Baltimore City Community College, the University System of Maryland, Morgan State University, and St. Mary’s College of Maryland.
- 4) The Commission staff recommends approval of the \$8,000,000 planned in the CIP for the MICUA FY 2026 capital budget.

The Commissioners asked questions about the presentation. **Commissioner Burnim** made a motion to approve the recommendations, and **Commissioner Thompson** seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Department of Academic Affairs – Draft Statewide Goals for Higher Education – Information Item

Chair Motz thanked Vice Chair Aguh for his work in leading the Education Policy Committee to review and discuss the draft statewide goals for higher education. **Vice Chair Aguh** thanked Commissioners Dukes, Serrano, Taber Staehelin, and Williams for serving on the committee. **Chair Motz** recognized Dr. Dow to present this item. The Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) is proposing the following draft goals for higher education:

- Postsecondary completion gaps are eliminated.
- At least 65% of Marylanders aged 25-64 will have a certificate or degree by 2030.
- MHEC establish an annual goal for the number of students completing a credential of value.
- Institutions of higher education establish research and innovation goals that are aligned with Maryland's economic strengths, strategic vision, and workforce sectors (e.g., start-up businesses, university-based patents, and research funding).

The draft goals identify where Maryland needs to go to ensure no one in Maryland is left behind and that we advance Maryland's economic competitiveness. More work will need to be done to define the draft goals and identify data sources for ongoing measurement. Dr. Dow then provided some background information, reported on where Maryland is with the existing goal, gave justification for the draft goals, and presented an overview of the process and next steps.

The Commissioners asked questions and shared their thoughts about the presentation. **Commissioner Wormack** made a motion for the Maryland Higher Education Commission to move forward conceptually with the draft goals, understanding that more input will be sought and received. **Commissioner Thompson** seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Department of Academic Affairs – Discussion of Duplication Analysis – Information Item

Chair Motz recognized Dr. Dow to present this item. Dr. Dow shared a PowerPoint presentation on unreasonable duplication analysis. There are 8 draft general rules:

- 1) Unreasonable program duplication does not exist unless the two programs are at the same degree or certificate level.
- 2) Unreasonable program duplication does not exist if the development of a new program or discipline is identified as needed to meet a State or regional workforce shortage through the annual appendix of the State Plan for Higher Education.
- 3) Unreasonable program duplication is most likely to exist within specialty programs, sub-disciplines, professional degrees, and occupation-specific programs.

- 4) Duplication is presumed not to exist if an existing program is a basic, common, or core program at a particular degree or certificate level.
- 5) Because every community college in the State serves a different region of the State, duplication of an associate's degree program, a lower division certificate, or other academic program at one community college by another community college is not unreasonable.
- 6) At the bachelor's degree level: basic, common, or core programs in the liberal arts, social sciences, theoretical sciences, business, and education are not unreasonably duplicative.
- 7) Duplication of master's degrees, post-baccalaureate certificates, and graduate certificates: common programs in the traditional liberal arts, social sciences, and theoretical sciences are not unreasonably duplicative.
- 8) All proposals for doctoral degrees shall be reviewed for unreasonable program duplication.

Next steps include a discussion with the Program Review Process Advisory Council on November 20. Updates will also be provided at the December 11 Commission meeting. The Commissioners asked questions about the presentation.

Office of the Attorney General – Final Adoption of Regulations and Regulatory Amendments – New Regulations for Promise Scholarship Program (COMAR 13B.08.21) – Action Item

Chair Motz recognized Ms. Soma Kedia, Assistant Attorney General, to present this item. On July 24, 2024, the Commission approved for publication the (1) repeal of the current regulations for the Maryland Community College Promise Scholarship Program and (2) new regulations to replace the current ones. The purpose of the new regulations is implement the changes needed to decentralize the program, as required under Chapter 634 of the Acts of 2023 (HB 923). Now, instead of making scholarship awards directly to students, the Commission's Office of Student Financial Assistance is responsible for allocating appropriated funds to the State's 16 community colleges, who are to award each scholarship.

The proposed regulations were published in the Maryland Register on September 6, 2024. The public comment period for the regulations ended on October 7, 2024, and no public comments were received. The regulations became eligible for final adoption on October 22, 2024. The new regulations will become effective 10 days after notice of the final adoption is published in the Maryland Register.

Ms. Kedia recommended that the Commission approves for final adoption the regulatory proposal for repeal of the current regulations and replacement with new regulations for the Maryland Community College Promise Scholarship Program. **Chair Motz** made a motion for approval, and **Vice Chair Aguh** seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Office of the Attorney General – Final Adoption of Regulations and Regulatory Amendments – Amendments to Regulations for Student Loan Debt Relief Tax Credit Program (COMAR 13B.08.17) – Action Item

Ms. Kedia presented this item. On June 28, 2023, the Commission approved for publication amendments to the regulations for the Student Loan Debt Relief Tax Credit Program. The purpose of the amendments is to implement changes required under Chapter 738 of the Acts of 2023 (HB 680) and to make language changes that clarify certain existing provisions. The primary purposes of the referenced legislation were to double the available funds for the program from \$9,000,000 to \$18,000,000 and to add new eligibility categories.

The proposed regulatory amendments were published in the Maryland Register on August 9, 2024. The public comment period for the amendments ended on September 9, 2024, and no public comments were received. The regulatory amendments became eligible for final adoption on September 24, 2024. The regulatory amendments will become effective 10 days after notice of the final adoption is published in the Maryland Register.

Ms. Kedia recommended that the Commission approves for final adoption the regulatory proposal for amendments to the regulations for the Student Loan Debt Relief Tax Credit Program. **Commissioner Serrano** made a motion for approval, and **Commissioner Howe** seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Office of the Attorney General – Final Adoption of Regulations and Regulatory Amendments – Amendments to Regulation for Academic Program Review – Review Meeting Process (COMAR 13B.02.03.28) – Action Item

Ms. Kedia presented this item. On July 24, 2024, the Commission approved for publication amendments to the academic program review regulation governing the Review Meeting process. The purpose of the amendments is to integrate certain requirements required by Chapter 963 of the Acts of 2024 (HB 1244), such as allowing each institution to have at least 10 minutes, without interruption, to present to the Commission and to conduct any discussion and formal action in open session. Additionally, the amendments make changes intended to simplify the process, such as alterations to the timeline of the process, removing “rebuttal” presentations, and providing for all institutions to have equal speaking time.

The regulatory amendments were published in the Maryland Register on September 6, 2024. The public comment period for the amendments ended on October 7, 2024, and no public comments were received. The regulatory amendments became eligible for final adoption on October 22, 2024.

By default, regulations are effective 10 days after notice of the final adoption is published in the Maryland Register, a later effective date may be requested. To simplify communications with institutions regarding when the new Review Meeting process will be in effect, the Assistant Secretary for Academic Affairs has recommended an effective date for these regulatory amendments of December 1, 2024.

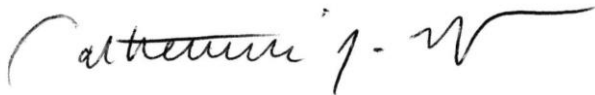
Ms. Kedia recommended that the Commission approves for final adoption the regulatory proposal for amendments to the regulation for the Review Meeting Process for academic program review, with an effective date of December 1, 2024. **Commissioner Serrano** made a

motion for approval, and **Commissioner Howe** seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Adjournment

Vice Chair Aguh made a motion to adjourn the meeting, and **Commissioner Burnim** seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 12:22 p.m.

Approved by the Commission:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Catherine J. Motz", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Catherine J. "Cassie" Motz, Chair