

MARYLAND HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION

MEETING BOOKLET

Time: 10:00 AM – 1:00 PM
Wednesday, July 23, 2025

Place: Video Teleconference
(Google Meet)

Maryland Higher Education Commission

Catherine J. “Cassie” Motz, Chair

Chike Aguh, Vice Chair

Kathleen Bands, Ph.D.

Mickey L. Burnim, Ph.D.

Charlene Mickens Dukes, Ed.D.

Barbara Kerr Howe

Narcisa A. Polonio, Ed.D.

Rebecca Taber Staehelin

Sheila D. Thompson, Ph.D.

Craig A. Williams, Ph.D.

Janet E. Wormack, Ed.D.

Sarah Otwey, Student Commissioner

Sanjay Rai, Ph.D.

Secretary

Wes Moore
Governor

Aruna Miller
Lt. Governor



Governor

Wes Moore

Lt. Governor

Aruna Miller

Secretary

Sanjay Rai, Ph.D.

Commission Chair

Catherine J. "Cassie" Motz

Commission Vice Chair

Chike Aguh

Commissioners

Kathleen Bands, Ph.D.

Mickey L. Burnim, Ph.D.

Charlene Mickens Dukes, Ed.D.

Barbara Kerr Howe

Narcisa A. Polonio, Ed.D.

Rebecca Taber Staehelin

Sheila D. Thompson, Ph.D.

Craig A. Williams, Ph.D.

Janet E. Wormack, Ed.D.

Sarah Otwey, Student
Commissioner

Principal Counsel

Kimberly Smith Ward

Maryland Higher Education Commission Meeting Agenda

TIME: 10:00 a.m. Wednesday, July 23, 2025

PLACE: Virtual (via Google Meet)

**Page Action
Item**

Call to Order

Chair's and Secretary's Remarks

Public Comments

Commission Meeting Minutes Approval

- June 26, 2025..... 2 *

Federal Policy Updates –

Kamal Essaheb, Senior Advisor and Director of
Immigrant Affairs

Update on the Maryland State Plan for Higher Education –

Vice Chair Chike Aguh and Elena Quiroz-Livanis

Department of Finance & Administration – Geoffrey Newman

- Office of Student Financial Assistance – Al Dorsett
 - Update on FAFSA Completion
 - Scholarship Awarding Update
 - COMAR 13B 08.23.07 Institutional Allocation and Notification *
 - COMAR 13B 08.23.08 Distribution and Allocation of Funds (Repealed) *

Department of Academic Affairs – Dr. Emily Dow

- Letters of Intent – Dr. Emily Dow..... 9 *

Adjournment

**The next Commission meeting will be on Wednesday, August 27, 2025 @ 10 a.m.*

MARYLAND HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION

217 East Redwood Street • Suite 2100 • Baltimore, MD 21202

T 410.767.3300 • 800.974.0203 • F 410.332.0270 • TTY for the Deaf 800.735.2258 www.mhec.maryland.gov

Maryland Higher Education Commission Meeting Minutes

June 26, 2025 10:00 a.m.

The Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) met on Thursday, June 26, 2025 virtually via Google Meet.

Commission members present:

Catherine J. "Cassie" Motz, Chair	Ray Serrano, Ph.D.
Praise Alayode, Student Commissioner	Rebecca Taber Stachelin
Kathleen Bands, Ph.D.	Sheila D. Thompson, Ph.D.
Mickey L. Burnim, Ph.D.	Craig A. Williams, Ph.D.
Barbara Kerr Howe	Janet E. Wormack, Ed.D.

Commission members absent:

Charlene Dukes	Chike Aguh, Vice Chair
----------------	------------------------

Staff members present:

Sanjay Rai, Ph.D.	Emily A. A. Dow, Ph.D.
Alexandra Nguyen	Al Dorsett
Ann Kellogg	Elena Quiroz-Livanis
Geoffrey Newman	Kristina Fripps
Anthony Reiner	Alexis Merriman
Allie Edelstein	Bryson Barksdale

Cara Martinez	Elisabeth Layton
Glenda Abney	Karen King-Sheridan
Khia Poteat	Kimberly Ward
Kristin Clarkson	Laura Schenk
Lyndsay Silva	Rose Robinson
Samual Durai Pandian	Shayla Hunter
Thomas Waters Jr.	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 ten (10) out of twelve (12) members present.

Chair's and Secretary's Remarks

Chair Motz welcomed everyone to the meeting, acknowledged the service of outgoing **Commissioners Ray Serrano** and **Praise Alayode**, and introduced new staff member Alex Nguyen. She also shared updates on MHEC activities, including attending a convening held by the Aspen Institute on community college transfer and stressed the importance of full commissioner attendance for significant votes on program approval.

Secretary Rai thanked Commissioners Alayode and Serrano for their commitment and highlighted key MHEC initiatives, including teacher quality and diversity program grants the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA) meeting, and the access to contraception on college campuses convening. He congratulated the University System of Maryland's new partnership with Google. He also reported on efforts related to improving outcomes for transfer students.

Public Comments

There were no public comments.

Commission Meeting Minutes Approval

A motion was made by **Commissioner Howe** and seconded by **Commissioner Alayode** to approve the minutes from the May 28, 2025 meeting. The motion passed unanimously.

Update on the Maryland State Plan for Higher Education

Deputy Secretary Elena Quiroz-Livanis provided an update on the Maryland State Plan for Higher Education 2026-2030. She outlined the statutory requirements for the plan, the ongoing engagement with key partners, and the formation of a steering committee representing various stakeholders. She emphasized the plan's role in setting the mission for post-secondary education and aligning legislative agendas, institutional missions, performance accountability, and research agendas. The vision for the new state plan is to create a modern post-secondary education system that prepares students for a dynamic economy and ensures no Marylander is left behind. The goal is to have a final version for adoption in December, with a draft by November. Student input will be incorporated through the steering committee and existing advisory councils.

Department of Finance & Administration - Geoffrey Newman

Office of Student Financial Assistance - Al Dorsett

Update on FAFSA Completion Scholarship Awarding Update

Al Dorsett presented an overview of the financial assistance programs for FY 2026, categorizing them into need-based, decentralized, career-based, unique, and loan assistance repayment units. He detailed the recent expansion of the application and award cycle for most programs.

Regarding the Howard P. Rawlings Educational Excellence Awards Program for FY 2026, Al Dorsett reported on the budget increase and maximum award amount. He explained delays in awarding due to system updates and provided statistics on awarded, accepted, declined, and canceled awards. Awards continue weekly, and appeals are under review. Declined awards can be due to students choosing out-of-state institutions or not meeting academic progress, while cancellations often occur after a period of no response but can be reinstated. Maryland's financial aid is separate from federal changes and based on the state budget, with state grants remaining significant. Maryland's need-based financial aid allocation increased by 21%.

FAFSA completion rates for the high school class of 2025 are at 51.3% as of June 13, 2025, an increase compared to pre-change years (22-23).

Chair Motz confirmed that the decentralization of financial aid awarding, a legislative requirement, will proceed next year. Guidance will be issued, and input will be sought from segments at the upcoming Financial Assistance Advisory Council meeting. Al Dorsett confirmed meetings with USM, MACC, and MICUA leadership and plans for webinars to support institutions in the transition. An update on decentralization progress is requested for the July 23rd Commission meeting.

Department of Academic Affairs - Dr. Emily Dow

Update on Letters of Intent - Dr. Emily Dow

Dr. Emily Dow provided an update on House Bill 1244, which introduces a new process for letters of intent for graduate programs. The purpose is to provide early feedback on potential duplication and facilitate collaboration. She presented a draft template developed with the

Program Review Process Advisory Council (PRPAC), which focuses on essential information for staff to assess duplication and collaboration opportunities. Feedback from commissioners is being solicited before a final draft is presented to PRPAC in July and then to the Commission for final review. The process will be piloted before formalizing regulations.

The letter of intent template includes sections for institution and program overview, draft program details, justification of reasonableness regarding duplication, intended population, potential prerequisites and admissions requirements, and existing/new resource considerations for collaboration. The process involves staff review, no public disclosure, feedback to the institution within four weeks, and written communication. MHEC's role is to foster collaboration and suggest ways to differentiate programs, with recommendations informed by discussions with proposing institutions, accreditors, and field experts. Specific accreditation details are not required in the letter of intent, but mentioning a national accreditor is sufficient.

Presentation on MDCLAW (Maryland College Labor Sector and Wage Explorer) **Dashboard – Dr. Ann Kellogg**

Dr. Ann Kellogg presented the Maryland College Labor Sector and Wage Explorer (MDCLAW), a new public-facing tool developed by the Maryland Longitudinal Data System Center (MLDS). MLDS is the state's repository for workforce and education data, producing actionable information for policymakers. The MDCLAW allows colleges to access data on their graduates' labor market outcomes in Maryland.

MDCLAW features a Power BI interface with snapshots of Maryland and college outcomes. Users can filter data by sector, institution, and degree level to view graduation year outcomes, labor force participation rates, and median wages at different intervals. The tool also allows for analysis of quarterly labor market participation and disaggregation of data by student characteristics like in-state/out-of-state status, demographics, and college majors. A second tab analyzes graduate outcomes by labor sector.

Concerns about potential misinterpretations of wage data were acknowledged, with footnotes and information provided about wage variations. Training for high school guidance counselors on data interpretation is being considered. Data is lagged by 6 months to a year, with the tool updated approximately every six months. Potential enhancements include adding military status data. A separate report on labor market outcomes for individuals who were homeless during high school can be shared.

The MDCLAW is emphasized as a valuable tool for evidence-based decision-making and identifying credentials of value. A significant finding is that Maryland residents graduating from Maryland colleges have a much higher rate of staying and participating in the Maryland labor market (over 50%) compared to out-of-state graduates (around 10%). The tool can indicate wage trends over time, and all wages are inflation-adjusted to 2023 for accurate comparison.

Adjournment

Commissioners expressed appreciation for Dr. Kellogg's presentation and the MDCLAW tool. **Chair Motz** thanked the departing commissioners, **Commissioner Serrano** and **Commissioner**

Alayode, for their contributions. A motion to adjourn was made and seconded, and the meeting was adjourned.

Approved by the Commission:

Catherine J. "Cassie" Motz, Chair

**Governor**

Wes Moore

Lt. Governor

Aruna Miller

Secretary

Sanjay Rai, Ph.D.

Commission Chair

Catherine J. "Cassie" Motz

Commission Vice Chair

Chike Aguh

Commissioners

Kathleen Bands, Ph.D.

Mickey L. Burnim, Ph.D.

Charlene Mickens Dukes, Ed.D.

Barbara Kerr Howe

Narcisa A. Polonio, Ed.D.

Rebecca Taber Staehelin

Sheila D. Thompson, Ph.D.

Craig A. Williams, Ph.D.

Janet E. Wormack, Ed.D.

Sarah Otwey, Student
Commissioner

Principal Counsel

Kimberly Smith Ward

Maryland Higher Education Commission 2025 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 (meeting modality TBD) are held on the 4th Wednesday of each month from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., with certain exceptions noted below.

Scheduled Meeting Dates for 2025

January 22, 2025

February 26, 2025

March 26, 2025

April 23, 2025

May 28, 2025

June 26, 2025

July 23, 2025

August 27, 2025

September 17, 2025

(3rd Wednesday)
10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

October 22, 2025

November 19, 2025

(3rd Wednesday)

December 10, 2025

(2nd Wednesday)

Dates, times, and details are subject to change.

Please check this website for the most up-to-date information:

<http://www.mhec.maryland.gov/About/Pages/Meetings.aspx>

MARYLAND HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION

217 East Redwood Street • Suite 2100 • Baltimore, MD 21202

T 410.767.3300 • 800.974.0203 • F 410.332.0270 • TTY for the Deaf 800.735.2258 www.mhec.maryland.gov



Governor

Wes Moore

Lt. Governor

Aruna Miller

Secretary

Sanjay Rai, Ph.D.

Commission Chair

Catherine J. "Cassie" Motz

Commission Vice Chair

Chike Aguh

Commissioners

Kathleen Bands, Ph.D.

Mickey L. Burnim, Ph.D.

Charlene Mickens Dukes, Ed.D.

Barbara Kerr Howe

Narcisa A. Polonio, Ed.D.

Rebecca Taber Staehelin

Sheila D. Thompson, Ph.D.

Craig A. Williams, Ph.D.

Janet E. Wormack, Ed.D.

Sarah Otwey, Student
Commissioner

Principal Counsel

Kimberly Smith Ward

MEMORANDUM

DATE: July 23, 2025
TO: Commissioners, Maryland Higher Education Commission
FROM: Emily A. A. Dow, Ph.D.,
Assistant Secretary for Academic Affairs
SUBJECT: Letter of Intent Template

In the 2024 Legislative Session, the General Assembly passed HB1244 (CH963 of the Acts of 2024), which now requires public senior and private nonprofit institutions proposing new graduate-level academic programs to first submit a Letter of Intent (LOI) beginning in 2025. The purpose of the LOI is not to evaluate or approve a program, but to create an early communication checkpoint to (a) identify potential duplication and (b) encourage collaboration between institutions before significant resources are invested in a full proposal. The process is intended to be clear, non-punitive, and helpful.

After significant discussion and approval with the Program Review Process Advisory Council (PRPAC), Commission staff have developed the enclosed template. The template asks institutions to provide basic, high-level information about the potential program. Responses are meant to be brief, and bullet points are welcome.

We expect that we will accept LOI submission on a monthly basis beginning October 1, 2025. It is our expectation that Staff will review LOIs and provide written feedback within approximately four weeks. This feedback may flag potential duplication, suggest partnerships, offer general guidance, and, when appropriate, bring institutions together for further discussion. This work is intended to ensure a smoother and more coordinated academic program development process that occurs across the state.

Following the initial round of submissions, Commission staff will return to both PRPAC and the Commission with a progress update and recommended refinements. Once the process has been evaluated and stabilized, proposed regulations will be presented for formal approval.

RECOMMENDATION: It is recommend that the Maryland Higher Education Commission approve the enclosed Letter of Intent template and authorize staff to implement the process as outlined, beginning October 1, 2025. Staff will continue to work the PRPAC and other stakeholders to refine the process and return with recommended regulations following initial implementation.

MARYLAND HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION

217 East Redwood Street • Suite 2100 • Baltimore, MD 21202

T 410.767.3300 • 800.974.0203 • F 410.332.0270 • TTY for the Deaf 800.735.2258 www.mhec.maryland.gov

Letter of Intent: New Graduate-level Academic Programs

Background: All public senior and private nonprofit institutions of higher education in Maryland must submit a Letter of Intent (LOI) to the Maryland Higher Education Commission for a new graduate-level programs the institution intends to propose within the subsequent 6-month to 2-year period. Submission of LOIs is only required for new graduate-level programs.

Before an institution submits a formal program proposal, the LOI is intended to (a) facilitate collaboration between institutions and (b) allow the Commission to provide early feedback regarding concerns about unnecessary duplication or unreasonable program duplication. While the LOI enables dialogue and transparency, it does not establish any priority or right of first refusal for program approval. The Commission will review submitted LOIs to identify potentially similar programs and, if necessary, notify the institutions involved to encourage coordination.

LOIs will not be posted or circulated publicly. Instead, MHEC staff will review submissions and provide institutions with feedback, including analysis of potential duplication and opportunities for collaboration.

LOIs are intended to serve as an early-stage communication tool, not a formal or evaluative submission. Its purpose is to support collaboration between institutions and allow MHEC to provide timely, constructive feedback prior to a full proposal. Institutions are encouraged to keep responses brief and use bullet points or short summaries where appropriate. LOIs should be no more than 4 pages.

Implementation Timeline: The tentative implementation timeline begins with the first round of LOIs due October 1, 2025. Any proposal for a graduate program submitted *after* October 1, 2025 must begin with an LOI. Commission staff will review and provide initial feedback by October 31, 2025. There is an expectation that MHEC will provide feedback to the campus president within four-weeks of submission. Assuming no major issues or necessary changes to the template or process, the next LOI submission date will be November 1, 2025, and future submission dates will be monthly on the 1st.

A process update will be shared at the October and November Program Review Process Advisory Council (PRPAC) meetings and Commission meetings. Draft regulations to formalize the LOI process will be shared at either the December or January PRPAC meeting for discussion.

Questions regarding this process can be directed to Dr. Lyndsay Silva, Associate Director for Academic Program Review (lyndsay.silva@maryland.gov).

Name of Institution:	
-----------------------------	--

Preferred Contact	Name:	
	E-mail:	Phone:

Program Overview	Draft Title:	
	Degree Level:	Proposed Modality ¹ :
	Intended Implementation Date:	

Draft Program Details	Provide a draft program description.
	Describe the intended competencies and skills.
	Describe the intended employment for graduates.
	Provide information on the need ² for the potential program.

Reasonableness of Program Duplication	Are there existing programs listed on MHEC's Academic Program Inventory ³ (API) that are similar to the potential program? If yes, please identify the institution(s) and program(s).
	If yes, please provide an explanation of how the potential program would not be duplicative (e.g., potential admission criteria, differentiated curriculum, specific areas of concentration, intended employment opportunities, etc.).

External Considerations	Will students earn any licensure or certification through the potential program? If yes, please explain.
--------------------------------	--

¹ Fully in-person, fully online, hybrid

² Four kinds of needs may be identified (COMAR 13B.02.03.08): (1) The need for the advancement and evolution of knowledge; (2) Societal needs, including expanding educational opportunities and choices for minority and educationally disadvantaged students at institutions of higher education; (3) Occupational and professional needs relative to upgrading vocational/ technical skills or meeting job market requirements – please reference the annual Workforce Needs Analysis (<https://mhec.maryland.gov/Pages/Workforce-Needs-Analysis--Public-Comment.aspx>); and, (4) The need to strengthen and expand the capacity of historically black institutions to provide high quality and unique educational programs.

³ https://mhec.maryland.gov/institutions_training/pages/heprograms.aspx or <https://data.mhec.state.md.us/macAux.asp#api>

	Would the potential program require approval from a national accreditor or other outside entity for implementation? If yes, please explain.
--	---

Resources	What additional resources may be needed to implement the potential program (e.g., more or specialized faculty, expansion/renovation of facilities)? Have those resource requests been submitted and/or approved?
------------------	--

Mission	How is the potential program aligned with the institution's approved mission?
----------------	---

Provost/Chief Academic Officer	Name:	
	Signature:	Date: