

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.
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Praise Alayode, Student Commissioner	Rebecca Taber Staehelin
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Kathleen Bands, Ph.D.	Sheila D. Thompson, Ph.D.
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Mickey L. Burnim, Ph.D.	Craig A. Williams, Ph.D.
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Barbara Kerr Howe	Janet E. Wormack, Ed.D.
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Commission members absent:

Charlene Dukes	Chike Aguh, Vice Chair
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Staff members present:

Sanjay Rai, Ph.D.	Emily A. A. Dow, Ph.D.
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Alexandra Nguyen	Al Dorsett
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Ann Kellogg	Elena Quiroz-Livanis
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Geoffrey Newman	Kristina Fripps
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Anthony Reiner	Alexis Merriman
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Allie Edelstein	Bryson Barksdale
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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 MDCLAWE (Maryland College Labor Sector and Wage Explorer) Dashboard – Dr. Ann Kellogg

Dr. Ann Kellogg presented the Maryland College Labor Sector and Wage Explorer (MDCLAWE), 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 MDCLAWE allows colleges to access data on their graduates' labor market outcomes in Maryland.

MDCLAWE 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 MDCLAWE 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 MDCLAWE 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