

Maryland Higher Education Commission

Meeting Book

September 17, 2025



Wes Moore
Governor

Aruna Miller
Lt. Governor

Commission Member Roster

Name	Title
Sanjay Rai, Ph.D.	Secretary of Higher Education
Catherine J. “Cassie” Motz	Chair
Chike Aguh	Vice Chair
Kathleen Bands, Ph.D.	Commissioner
Mickey L. Burnim, Ph.D.	Commissioner
Charlene Mickens Dukes, Ed.D.	Commissioner
Barbara Kerr Howe	Commissioner
Narcisa A. Polonio, Ed.D.	Commissioner
Rebecca Taber Staehelin	Commissioner
Sheila D. Thompson, Ph.D.	Commissioner
Craig A. Williams, Ph.D.	Commissioner
Janet E. Wormack, Ed.D.	Commissioner
Sarah Otwey	Student Commissioner

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Maryland Higher Education Commission
Meeting Agenda: Wednesday, September 17, 2025

Time: 10:00 AM

Location:

15th Floor Conference Room
 217 E Redwood St.
 Baltimore, MD 21202

Google Meet joining info

Video call link: <https://meet.google.com/fma-pbsx-gqs>

Or dial: (US) +1 224-999-1740 PIN: 826 768 508#

More phone numbers: <https://tel.meet/fma-pbsx-gqs?pin=4683682793316>

Key: * = Voting Item

I. 10:00 a.m. - Welcome & Call to Order

A. Chair's and Secretary's Remarks

II. 10:10 a.m. - Review & Approval of Previous Minutes

A. *Review of minutes from the meeting on Wednesday, August 27, 2025

III. 10:15 a.m. - Business

A. Department of Finance & Administration (Assistant Secretary of Finance and Administration Newman)

1. Operating and Capital Budget Presentations

a) Presenters will discuss their budget requests and address how they align with the goals of the 2022 Maryland State Plan for Higher Education. The presentation will address specific topics such as student retention, graduation rates, student debt, employment rates, and institutional innovation. Each presentation will be 30 minutes, followed by 15 minutes for questions and answers.

(1) 10:15 a.m. - Baltimore City Community College
 (President McCurdy)

(2) 11:00 a.m. - University System of Maryland
 (Senior Chancellor for Academic and Student

Affairs Wrynn and Senior Chancellor for
Administration and Finance Herbst)

(3) 11:45 a.m. - St. Mary's College of Maryland
(President Phillips)

(4) 12:30 p.m. - Morgan State University (President
Wilson)

(5) 1:15 p.m. - Break

(6) 1:45 p.m. - Maryland Association of Community
Colleges (Executive Director Phillips)

(7) 2:30 p.m. - Maryland Independent College and
University Association (President Power)

(8) 3:15 p.m. - Regional Higher Education Centers
(Assistant Secretary of Finance and Administration
Newman and Center Directors)

B. *3:45 p.m. - Final Adoption: Proposed Amendments to COMAR
13B.02.01.12 and COMAR 13B.02.0216 – Definition of a Credit
Hour (Assistant Secretary for Academic Affairs Dow)

IV. Public Comment

V. 3:55 p.m. - Announcements

A. The next Commission meeting will be on Wednesday, October 22,
2025 at 10:00 AM EST.

VI. 4:00 p.m. - Adjournment

Maryland Higher Education Commission Meeting Minutes

August 27, 2025 10:00 a.m.

The Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) met virtually via Google Meet.

Commission Members Present:

Catherine J. "Cassie" Motz, Chair	Chike Aguh, Vice Chair
Kathleen Bands, Ph.D.	Mickey L. Burnim, Ph.D.
Barbara Kerr Howe	Narcisa A. Polonio, Ed.D.
Sheila D. Thompson, Ph.D.	Craig A. Williams, Ph.D.
Janet E. Wormack, Ed.D.	Sarah Otwey, Student Commissioner
Rebecca Taber Staehelin	

Commission Members Absent:

- Charlene Mickens Dukes, Ed.D.

MHEC Staff Members Present:

Glenda Abney	Bryson Barksdale	Kristin Clarkson
Melissa Dalal	Emily Dow	Allie Edelstein
Jennifer Fischetti	Victoria Johnson	Karen King-Sheridan
Elisabeth Layton	Tiffany Majors	Cara Martinez
Alexandra Nguyen	Elena Quiroz-Livanis	Sanjay Rai, Ph.D.
Anthony Reiner	Rose Robinson	Laura Schenk
Lyndsay Silva	Kimberly Ward	Thomas Waters Jr.

Guests Present:

Sarah Baker	Brian Bergen-Aurand	Candace Caraco Meg D
Andy Clark	Shira Diamond	Jennifer Frank
Alexis Hill White	Susan Lawrence	Zakiya Lee
David Mack	Jeanette Ortiz	Beatrix Peck
Matt Power	Janay Reece	Angela Sherman
Michael Thomas	Ellie Wolfe	Alison Wrynn

Welcome & 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 at the outset, with Commissioner Aguh and Commissioner Taber Staehelin joining later, bringing the total to eleven.

Chair Motz welcomed everyone to the meeting. She announced that the continuation of the program review for the Maryland Institute College of Art's (MICA) proposal for a Bachelor of Design (BDes) in Interior Design and Morgan State University's (Morgan) objection to it was removed from the agenda. This decision was made by staff and the Attorney General's office to gather additional information, specifically addressing legal questions regarding the applicability of education article section 11-206.1 of the Maryland Annotated Code, concerning new programs using existing resources and objections to undergraduate programs under recent legislative amendments.

Secretary Rai welcomed attendees and provided updates. He reported that a system error by a vendor led to incorrect eligibility determinations for guaranteed access grant awards, affecting over 600 students. MHEC reinstated awards for all affected students, committing \$6.2 million from Howard P. Rawling programs to honor these awards. A modernized scholarship management system is scheduled for deployment in Fall 2026 to prevent future errors. MHEC will formally request a statutory amendment to delay the decentralization of the guaranteed access grant until the 2029-2030 academic year to align with a new Maryland student information system and ensure institutional readiness. He also stated that MHEC would request legislative authorization and funding for a comprehensive capacity study and a review of financial aid redesign. Since the July meeting, MHEC has approved four new degree programs, with a 99.7% approval rate for 462 proposals processed in 2025. He acknowledged the formation

of a steering committee for the new state plan for higher education, which will meet monthly to finalize the document for adoption in Winter 2025.

Review & Approval of Previous Minutes

Commissioner Burnim made a motion to approve the meeting minutes of July 23, 2025, which was seconded by **Commissioner Howe**. The motion passed unanimously.

Update on the Maryland State Plan for Higher Education

Vice Chair Aguh and **Deputy Secretary Quiroz-Livanis** provided an update on the Maryland State Plan for Higher Education. **Vice Chair Aguh** emphasized that the plan aims to be a strategic document developed in collaboration with various stakeholders, including industry and community organizations, to identify present and future needs, capabilities, and priorities for post-secondary education and research. The vision for the plan includes contemporary post-secondary democracy, meaningful credentials, long-term competitiveness, and social well-being. The three statewide goals are post-secondary attainment, credential value, and public impact/innovation, with equity as a continuous element. Guiding principles include centering every learner, driving impact and value, and fostering collaboration. The steering committee for the Maryland State Plan will hold its third meeting in September, focusing on attainment and featuring outside experts to discuss Maryland's national and international standing. Subsequent meetings will address talent strategy, economic mobility, research, innovation, and public impact. **Commissioner Taber Staehelin** inquired about incorporating performance metrics for institutions, to which **Vice Chair Aguh** confirmed this would be addressed in upcoming meetings, and they are considering a "red team" of national experts to review the plan. **Commissioner Williams** sought clarification on the timeline, confirming that a draft is targeted for review and approval by the commission by the end of the calendar year, with the statutory deadline for the final plan being June or July 2026. **Deputy Secretary Quiroz-Livanis** clarified that the goal is to have the "Northstar document" ready before the legislative session in January 2026 and that it is intended to be a "living document" reviewed annually.

Bylaw Amendments

Chair Motz presented four proposed amendments to the commission bylaws, which had been circulated 14 days prior. The first amendment aligns the bylaws with current statutory language regarding the appointment and service of the Secretary of Higher Education. The second amendment establishes a specific quorum requirement for meetings considering objections to academic program proposals under education article 11-206.1. Amendments three and four update statutory references to reflect the relocation of the Maryland Open Meetings Act to title three of the general provisions article. **Commissioner Burnim** made a motion to approve the revisions to articles four, five, and six of the MHEC Bylaws, which was seconded by **Commissioner Taber Staehelin** and **Commissioner Thompson**. The motion passed with 11

"yes" votes and no objections or abstentions. **Kimberly Ward** confirmed that **Chair Motz** would sign the approved amendments.

Resumption of the Review Meeting - Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA) Proposal for a Bachelor of Design (BDes) in Interior Design

This item was removed from the agenda, as noted in the Chair Motz's Remarks.

Public Comment

There were no public comments.

Announcements

Chair Motz announced that the next meeting would be the annual budget meeting on Wednesday, September 17, 2025, starting at 10:00 a.m. and running all day. The meeting will be hybrid, with an option for in-person attendance at the new MHEC offices.

Adjournment

Vice Chair Aguh made a motion to adjourn the meeting, which was seconded by **Commissioner Howe** and **Commissioner Thompson**. The motion passed unanimously.

Approved by the Commission:

Catherine J. "Cassie" Motz, Chair

MEMORANDUM

**Governor**

Wes Moore

Lt. Governor

Aruna Miller

Secretary

Sanjay Rai, Ph.D.

Commission Chair

Catherine J. "Cassie" Motz

Commission Vice Chair

Chike Aguh

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Sarah Otwey, Student
Commissioner**Principal Counsel**

Kimberly Smith Ward

DATE: September 17, 2025

TO: Maryland Higher Education Commissioners

FROM: Emily A. A. Dow, Ph.D., Assistant Secretary for Academic Affairs

SUBJECT: Approval of Proposed Amendments to COMAR 13B.02.01.12 and COMAR 13B.02.0216 – Definition of a Credit Hour

The attached revisions to the definition of a credit hour under COMAR 13B.02.01.12 (regulations pertaining to out-of-state institutions) and COMAR 13B.02.02.16 (regulations pertaining to in-state institutions) are intended to align with the federal definition outlined in 34 CFR §600.2.

The revisions were circulated in the Maryland Register on July 25, 2025 and no comments were received.

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.

There are several motivating factors for this revision. First, a unified definition enhances transparency for students, institutions, and external stakeholders. Alignment between state and federal definitions creates consistent application of credit hour determinations. Second, this alignment accommodates diverse learning modalities (e.g., online, hybrid, competency-based, and experiential formats) through an outcomes-based approach. This flexibility is critical for expanding access and innovation in postsecondary education. Third, the federal credit hour definition is used for Title IV financial aid eligibility and accreditation. Aligning Maryland's regulations would reduce confusion and regulatory burden for institutions operating under dual frameworks.

The proposed change would replace the current time-based contact hour formula (e.g., 15/30/45 hours for lecture/lab/practica) with similar language used in the federal regulations. The new language defines a credit hour as "an amount of student work defined by the institution that reasonably approximates not less than (a) one hour of classroom or direct instruction and a minimum of two hours of out-of-class work per week for approximately 15 weeks, or the equivalent amount of work over a different period; or (b) an equivalent amount of work for academic activities such as labs, internships, practica, or studio work."

MARYLAND HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION

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This revision will also allow institutions to consider delivery methods, academic calendars, disciplines, and degree levels in determining the amount of work associated with a credit hour.

RECOMMENDATION: It is recommended that the Commission approve for final adoption the enclosed regulatory proposal for amendments to COMAR 13B.02.01.12 and COMAR 13B.02.0216 – Definition of a Credit Hour.

Maryland Higher Education Commission

2025 Meeting Dates

The Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) is Maryland's higher education coordinating board responsible for managing statewide financial aid programs and establishing statewide policies for public and private colleges and career schools to support students' postsecondary pursuits.

Commission meetings 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
- February 26
- March 26
- April 23
- May 28
- June 26
- July 23
- August 27
- September 17
 - (3rd Wednesday)
 - 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
 - Hybrid
- October 22
- November 19
 - (3rd Wednesday)
- December 10
 - 2nd Wednesday

Dates, times, and meeting modality are subject to change. Please check the website for the most up-to-date information:

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