

Maryland Higher Education Commission
Meeting Minutes

January 17, 2023
1:00 p.m.

The Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) met on Tuesday, January 17, 2023 via video teleconference (Google Meet).

Commission members present:

Mary Pat Seurkamp, Ph.D., Chair	James B. Sellinger, Sr.
Vivian S. Boyd, Ph.D.	Ray Serrano, Ph.D.
James E. Coleman	Craig A. Williams, Ph.D.
Judge Barbara Kerr Howe (arrived at 2:10 p.m.)	Sade Davis, Student Commissioner

Commission members not present:

Senchal D. Barrolle, Esq.	Charles McDaniels, Jr., Vice Chair
Lewis R. Brown, Ed.D.	

Staff members present:

Al Dorsett	Emily A. A. Dow, Ph.D.
Geoffrey Newman	Donita Moore
Lee Towers	Trish Gordon-McCown
Tatyana Tate	Melissa Leuschel
Yuxin Lin, Ph.D.	Alexandra Edelstein
Rhonda Wardlaw	Soma Kedia
Barbara Schmertz, Ph.D.	Anthony Reiner
Victoria Johnson	Frances Turner
Bryson Barksdale	Glenda Abney
Tegwa Fadl Alla	Jeffrey White
Daniel Schuster	Rose Robinson

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by **Chair Seurkamp** at approximately 1:00 p.m. A meeting quorum was established with eight (8) of the eleven (11) members present.

Chair's Remarks

Chair Seurkamp welcomed everyone and gave an overview of the meeting agenda. She thanked Dr. James Fielder, who resigned effective January 10, 2023, for his service as Secretary

of Higher Education. Dr. Fielder provided knowledge and expertise to the Commission, and he demonstrated true leadership.

Public Comments

Chair Seurkamp recognized Dr. James Fielder, former MHEC Secretary of Higher Education, who joined today's meeting for the opportunity to thank the Commissioners for their work. Dr. Fielder remarked that it was the honor of a lifetime for him to serve in this role in the Hogan-Rutherford Administration. During the last 7 years, they were able to increase student success and student access. His resignation was a part of the gubernatorial transition protocol, but he feels very proud of what was accomplished and is grateful to the Commissioners and staff for their efforts.

Approval of Minutes – Action Item

There was a motion by **Commissioner Serrano** and a second by **Commissioner Coleman** for approval of the December 14, 2022 meeting minutes. The motion was approved unanimously.

Commissioner Committee Updates

Education Policy Committee: There was no update to share.

Outreach, Grants, and Financial Assistance Committee: There was no update to share.

Finance and Operations Committee: Mr. Geoffrey Newman, Assistant Secretary for Finance and Administration, reported that MHEC continues to fill vacancies in the agency. In fact, the new academic program review unit is now fully staffed. Additionally, the agency is currently awaiting the release of the Governor's FY 2024 budget.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee: There was no update to share.

Department of Finance and Administration – Office of Finance Policy – FY 2025 Community College Construction Grant Program: State and Local Cost-Sharing Formula – Information Item

Chair Seurkamp recognized Mr. Newman who asked Mr. Daniel Schuster, Finance Policy Analyst, to present this item. The Community College Construction Grant Program provides State assistance for the construction and improvement of facilities at community colleges. This grant funds the construction of major new facilities, renovation of existing facilities, and improvements to campus infrastructure. (Baltimore City Community College does not participate, as it is considered an agency of the State. Therefore, the State pays for 100% of its capital projects.)

The level of State participation in capital projects for the community colleges is determined by two criteria: the portion of the project that meets the space eligibility requirements for State support, and the State and local cost-sharing formula prescribed in statute and calculated by the

Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE). MSDE uses this cost-sharing formula to calculate the State's share in providing financial assistance for public education. The formula is based on a current expense calculation that considers the enrollment of students in elementary and secondary schools and county wealth (e.g., net taxable income, the assessed valuation of real property, and the assessed value of personal property).

Based on this cost-sharing formula, the State contributes between 50 percent and 70 percent of the eligible costs of a project for single-county-operated community colleges and 75 percent of the eligible costs of a project for regional community colleges. (The Commission meeting packet includes a table that shows the percentage of State share for newly introduced projects in the fiscal year 2025 community college capital budget request.) Clarifying questions were asked about the program.

Department of Academic Affairs – Maple Springs Baptist Bible College & Seminary, Approval of Stage One Application – Information Item

Chair Seurkamp recognized Dr. Dow who asked Ms. Trish Gordon McCown, the Director of Academic Affairs, to present this item. In accordance with the Code of Maryland regulations (COMAR) 13B.02.02, the Maryland Higher Education Commission has reviewed a Stage One initial application for a Certificate of Approval as an in-state, degree-granting institution submitted by Maple Springs Baptist Bible College & Seminary ("Maple Springs"), located in Capitol Heights, MD. The application includes a proposal to offer nine (9) degree programs.

Maple Springs Baptist Bible College & Seminary serves Christian-centered adults who want to prepare for local ministry and who seek an affordable college education that is available in the evenings and on weekends. Maple Springs teaches the Protestant theology and would address the needs of providing open enrollment to students with a non-competitive college admissions process, providing affordable, low-cost tuition for non-traditional students, offering evening and weekend classes, and serving the minority population of Prince George's County.

Maple Springs is approved to proceed to Stage Two of the application process. This decision was based on an analysis of the application in conjunction with the Maryland Higher Education Commission's minimum requirements for in-state, degree-granting institutions (COMAR 13B.02.02), the Maryland State Plan for Postsecondary Education, and a 30-day review by the Maryland higher education community. No comments or objections were received during the 30-day circulation period.

Once submitted, the Stage 2 application will be reviewed by MHEC staff. If the documentation submitted by Maple Springs satisfies the requirements of the Stage Two application, an evaluation team will be appointed to conduct an on-site visit to the institution to ensure that the institution complies with the regulations.

If, based on the evaluation team report and other available information, the Secretary is satisfied that the prospective in-state institution is in compliance with COMAR 13B.02.02 and the minimum requirements are met, the Secretary shall grant approval to operate. If the Secretary is

not satisfied that a prospective in-state institution is in compliance with this chapter, the Secretary shall issue a notice of deficiencies and deny approval to the institution.

If approved, an evaluation team will conduct an on-site visit to the in-state institution at the end of its first instructional year to ensure that the institution is in compliance with COMAR 13B.02.02 and any other condition upon which the Commission based the institution's approval to operate. The Commissioners asked some clarifying questions. Dr. Marquez Ball was present on behalf of Maple Springs to assist in answering questions.

Department of Academic Affairs – Maryland College of Osteopathic Medicine, Approval of Stage One Application – Information Item

Chair Seurkamp recognized Ms. McCown to present this item. In accordance with the Code of Maryland regulations (COMAR) 13B.02.02, the Maryland Higher Education Commission has reviewed a Stage One initial application for a Certificate of Approval as an in-state, degree-granting institution submitted by the Maryland College of Osteopathic Medicine (“MDCOM”), located at Morgan State University in Baltimore, MD. The application includes a proposal to offer a Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine (D.O.) degree program.

MDCOM is a public-private partnership with Morgan State University intended to train high-quality diverse physicians matching into all specialties to practice in racially and culturally diverse communities. MDCOM is a private institution to be funded initially by accredited investors, and will later be tuition-supported.

MDCOM is approved to proceed to Stage Two of the application process. This decision was based on an analysis of the application in conjunction with the Maryland Higher Education Commission's minimum requirements for in-state, degree-granting institutions (COMAR 13B.02.02), the Maryland State Plan for Postsecondary Education, and a 30-day review by the Maryland higher education community. No comments or objections were received during the 30-day circulation period.

Once submitted, the Stage 2 application will be reviewed by MHEC staff. If the documentation submitted by MDCOM satisfies the requirements of the Stage Two application, an evaluation team will be appointed to conduct an on-site visit to the institution to ensure that the institution complies with the regulations.

If, based on the evaluation team report and other available information, the Secretary is satisfied that the prospective in-state institution is in compliance with COMAR 13B.02.02 and the minimum requirements are met, the Secretary shall grant approval to operate. If the Secretary is not satisfied that a prospective in-state institution is in compliance with this chapter, the Secretary shall issue a notice of deficiencies and deny approval to the institution.

If approved, an evaluation team will conduct an on-site visit to the in-state institution at the end of its first instructional year to ensure that the institution is in compliance with COMAR 13B.02.02 and any other condition upon which the Commission based the institution's approval

to operate. The Commissioners asked several clarifying questions. Several individuals from MDCOM were present to answer any questions from the Commissioners.

Department of Academic Affairs – Meritus School of Osteopathic Medicine, Approval of Stage One Application – Information Item

Chair Seurkamp recognized Ms. McCown to present this item. In accordance with the Code of Maryland regulations (COMAR) 13B.02.02, the Maryland Higher Education Commission has reviewed a Stage One initial application for a Certificate of Approval as an in-state, degree-granting institution submitted by Meritus School of Osteopathic Medicine (“MSOM”), located in Hagerstown, MD. The application includes a proposal to offer a Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine (D.O.) degree program.

The proposed Meritus School of Osteopathic Medicine will be a private, non-profit institution to be owned and operated by Hagerstown, Maryland-based Meritus Health and funded by the health system. The institution is confident that Meritus Health can provide the necessary financial resources and investment to support the institution during its infancy until MSOM’s tuition-supported independent financial stability, which is expected in 2028. With an expected start date of 2025, MSOM will be focused on rural and underserved areas in western Maryland and other rural areas of Maryland.

MSOM is approved to proceed to Stage Two of the application process. This decision was based on an analysis of the application in conjunction with the Maryland Higher Education Commission’s minimum requirements for in-state, degree-granting institutions (COMAR 13B.02.02), the Maryland State Plan for Postsecondary Education, and a 30-day review by the Maryland higher education community. No comments or objections were received during the 30-day circulation period.

Once submitted, the Stage 2 application will be reviewed by MHEC staff. If the documentation submitted by MSOM satisfies the requirements of the Stage Two application, an evaluation team will be appointed to conduct an on-site visit to the institution to ensure that the institution complies with the regulations.

If, based on the evaluation team report and other available information, the Secretary is satisfied that the prospective in-state institution is in compliance with COMAR 13B.02.02 and the minimum requirements are met, the Secretary shall grant approval to operate. If the Secretary is not satisfied that a prospective in-state institution is in compliance with this chapter, the Secretary shall issue a notice of deficiencies and deny approval to the institution.

If approved, an evaluation team will conduct an on-site visit to the in-state institution at the end of its first instructional year to ensure that the institution is in compliance with COMAR 13B.02.02 and any other condition upon which the Commission based the institution’s approval to operate.

Commissioner Serrano asked if ground had been broken yet for the two osteopathic medical schools. Mr. David Mohr with MDCOM responded that they are currently finalizing the land

lease for their building and will be breaking ground next year. Dr. Maulik Joshi with MSOM answered that they have already broken ground and that it will take 2 years to build. Other questions of a clarifying nature were asked by the Commissioners.

Office of Research and Policy Analysis – 2022 Performance Accountability Report – Action Item

Chair Seurkamp 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, to present this item. The Performance Accountability Report (PAR) is an important mechanism by which public colleges and universities in Maryland are held accountable. Through a performance accountability plan, institutions are required to establish and maintain performance standards, and use metrics to assess their effectiveness in tackling institutional and statewide higher education goals. Every year, the governing board of each public institution of higher education is required to submit a written report to the Maryland Higher Education Commission on the institution’s progress in attaining the objectives in the performance accountability plan. This summative statewide report includes highlights from the Maryland’s public institutions’ submissions for the 2021-2022 academic year reporting cycle.

The submissions this year focus on equity issues. The report summarizes institutions’ progress toward the three key goals of access, success, and innovation with an “equity lens”. In short, the PAR metrics reflect that the institutions still face challenges in recovering from the negative impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on enrollment, student success, and financial resources, which may slow down the institution’s progress to meet some established benchmarks. Academic achievement gaps still exist for underrepresented students; the gaps in retention and degree completion even widened for some institutions during the pandemic. There is some evidence that institutional efforts may be shrinking these gaps, but more needs to be done to ensure all students have equitable opportunities to meet their academic goals.

This year, the Commission requested that institutions respond to both of the following two prompts for the institutional response:

- What is the biggest challenge your institution faces as it attempts to equitably meet the goals, objectives, and performance measures in the 2017-2021 State Plan for Postsecondary Education?
- Has your institution used disaggregated data to identify equity issues in students’ educational opportunities and outcomes? If so, how has this disaggregation of data provided insight into your institution’s educational equities and inequities? If not, what data has been used to understand student outcomes?

The most frequently named challenge was the declining enrollments, which lowers the revenues from tuition and fees. Some institutions specifically expressed their concerns about historically underserved populations. Another challenge that institutions were concerned about was the uncertainty in financial resources. Among the institutions who answered explicitly to the second prompt, almost all indicated that they use disaggregated data to identify educational inequities and to make improvements in ensuring equitable student outcomes. The measures that rely on

disaggregating the data include admission, enrollment, course outcomes, and other student success measures (e.g., retention, graduation, and transfer). The dimensions of the disaggregation include race, gender, socioeconomic status, and other demographic or financial characteristics.

While the long-term impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Maryland higher education is still unknown, universities and colleges remain committed to the goals of the State Plan and the vision established through their institutional missions. However, it is important to note that most of the measures reported in the 2022 PAR are based on the data collection of 2020-2021, which is the year under the most severe impact of the campus lockdown policy. Looking forward, in Fall 2022, the institutions are seeing bright spots in various performance measures. For example, the 2022-2023 tuition and fees at both public four-year institutions and community colleges remained stable despite the unprecedentedly high inflation rate. It is also believed that institutions are making progress toward their degree goals and on track to contribute to Maryland's degree attainment goal of having at least 55% of all Marylanders hold at least an associate's degree by 2025. In the coming year, the Commission will continue to partner with institutions to make sure students in Maryland receive high-quality postsecondary education consistently.

Dr. Lin recommended that the Commission approve the 2022 Performance Accountability Report for submission to the Governor and General Assembly as required by law. **Chair Seurkamp** expressed concern regarding the performance gap between racial groups and asked what institutions have indicated is helpful in closing this gap. Dr. Lin responded that institutions have found that financial assistance and advisement are both helpful. **Commissioner Coleman** asked if there was any state entity that exists to assist institutions facing certain challenges. Dr. Dow replied that there isn't such an entity, but most institutions work through challenges on their own. **Commissioner Davis** asked about the findings related to students who leave school and their reasons for leaving. Dr. Lin responded that the scope of their data collection is limited to certain in-state institutions. Dr. Schmertz added that some institutions do try to survey students on their reasons for leaving, but not all of them do. **Commissioner Serrano** asked how institutions could be encouraged to address these disparities. Dr. Lin answered that institutions are not only asked to report on outcomes, but they are also asked to find ways to address these challenges. Other clarifying questions were asked by the Commissioners.

Commissioner Coleman made a motion for approval and **Commissioner Serrano** seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

Vote for Closed Session to Discuss a Personnel Matter

Chair Seurkamp made a motion to enter into a closed session to discuss a personnel matter. **Commissioner Boyd** seconded the motion. The roll was taken:

Seurkamp – Yes
Boyd – Yes
Coleman – Yes
Howe – Yes

Serrano – Yes
Sellinger – Yes
Williams – Yes
Davis – Yes

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at approximately 2:28 p.m.