

**Maryland Higher Education Commission**  
Meeting Minutes

February 24, 2021  
1:00 p.m.

The Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) met on Wednesday, February 24, 2021 via video teleconference (GoToMeeting).

**Commission members present:**

Andrew R. Smarick, Chair	Vera R. Jackson, Ph.D.
Donna M. Mitchell, Vice Chair	Charles McDaniels, Jr.
Senchal D. Barrolle, Esq.	Sydney Miller, Student Commissioner
Vivian S. Boyd, Ph.D.	Mary Pat Seurkamp, Ph.D.
Lewis R. Brown, Ed.D.	John W. Yaeger, Ed.D.

**Commission members absent:**

James E. Coleman	James B. Sellinger, Sr.
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**Staff members present:**

James D. Fielder, Ph.D.	Emily A. A. Dow, Ph.D.
Geoffrey Newman	Jennifer Katz
Soma Kedia	Trish Gordon McCown
Lee Towers	Tavon Vinson
Karen King-Sheridan	Jacqueline Cade
Bryson Barksdale	Jermal Butler
Alexia Van Orden	Donna Thomas
Glenda Abney	

**Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order by **Chair Smarick** at approximately 1:01 p.m. A meeting quorum was established with ten (10) members present.

**Chair's Remarks**

**Chair Smarick** remarked that he was glad to be with everyone again, and he thanked the staff for the meeting documents.

**Secretary's Remarks**

**Secretary Fielder** reported that the legislative session was ongoing, and that Senate Bill 1 Historically Black Colleges and Universities – Funding was expected to pass. It would take

effect in FY 2023. He also announced that Notre Dame of Maryland University has rescinded its request for the Commission to review the denial of their proposed undergraduate program in Actuarial Science. (Morgan State University had objected to the proposed program, as it has an undergraduate degree in Actuarial Science, a unique program at an HBCU.)

### **Commission Minutes Approval**

**Commissioner Jackson** motioned to approve the December 16, 2020 closed session meeting minutes and the January 27, 2021 meeting minutes, and **Commissioner McDaniels** seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

### **Commissioner Committee Updates**

There were no Commissioner Committee updates.

### **Department of Finance and Administration – Office of Student Financial Assistance – Approval of Proposed Amendments to COMAR Scholarship Regulations – Delegate Howard P. Rawlings Educational Excellence Awards Program – Action Item**

**Chair Smarick** recognized Mr. Geoffrey Newman, Assistant Secretary for Finance and Administration, who asked Ms. Donna Thomas, Director of the Office of Student Financial Assistance, to present this item. Ms. Thomas stated that she is requesting approval to publish proposed amendments to the Howard P. Rawlings Educational Excellence Awards Program COMAR regulations 13B.08.10. The amendments include:

- Removal of term “alternate application”;
- Defining “Maryland State Financial Aid Application” and inserting the acronym of MSFAA appropriately throughout the regulations;
- Adding institutional requirements for institutions that elect to verify eligibility for Guaranteed Access Grant recipients;
- Clarify the selection of recipients process;
- Clarify the verification of eligibility requirements that are to be performed by MHEC and post-secondary institutions to align with statutory requirements;
- Adding new appeal criteria for Guaranteed Access Grant applicants that miss the March 1 FAFSA/MSFAA deadline; and
- Clarify the institutional audit requirements for any post-secondary institution that elects to complete the verification process for Guaranteed Access Grant recipients.

Ms. Thomas recommended that the Commission approve for publication in the Maryland Register the proposed amendments for the Howard P. Rawlings Educational Excellence Awards Program, and authorize MHEC’s attorneys to approve non-substantive revisions as necessary to conform the proposed regulations to the stylistic and formatting requirements of AELR and of the Division of State Documents. **Commissioner Boyd** made a motion for approval, and **Commissioner Mitchell** seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

### **Department of External Relations – Legislative Update – Information Item**

**Chair Smarick** recognized Mr. Lee Towers, Executive Director of External Relations, who reported on the progress of the 2021 legislative session. Senate Bill 1/House Bill 1 Historically Black Colleges and Universities – Funding is a bill that would have a large impact on MHEC. At this point, neither bill is scheduled for a hearing, and both are a little different. SB 1 uses the Cigarette Restitution Fund as an additional funding mechanism. Senate Bill 965/House Bill 1372 Blueprint for Maryland’s Future – Revisions is another bill that would affect the agency. However, it has not been scheduled for a hearing yet. Additionally, the budget hearings have been progressing well.

### **Department of Academic Affairs – Report on Institutions of Higher Education Program Review: Secretary Actions for Quarter 4 (October 1, 2020 to December 31, 2020) – Information Item**

**Chair Smarick** recognized Dr. Emily Dow (MHEC’s Assistant Secretary for Academic Affairs) who asked Ms. Trish Gordon McCown (MHEC’s Director of Academic Affairs) to present this item. Ms. McCown provided an overview of the Secretary’s actions during the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter concerning a program objection, new degree programs, certificate programs, areas of concentration, substantial modifications to existing programs, non-substantial modifications to existing programs, proposals withdrawn, institutional program partnerships, and out-of-state institutions.

**Chair Smarick** asked if there was anything of note in the report. Ms. McCown pointed to Towson University and Loyola University Maryland’s actions under Institutional Program Partnerships. Both schools withdrew a number of programs from their off-site locations. **Commissioner Boyd** asked the reason for these closures, and Ms. McCown responded that she would have to look it up, as she did not have specific details.

### **Department of Academic Affairs – Report on Private Career Schools: Secretary Actions for Quarter 4 (October 1, 2020 to December 30, 2020) – Information Item**

**Chair Smarick** recognized Ms. McCown who provided an overview of the Secretary’s actions during the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter concerning the approval of a new school, certificate renewals, school approvals withdrawn, workforce development sequence scholarship approvals, workforce development sequence scholarship modifications approved, transcripts requested, and training provider questionnaires.

**Chair Smarick** inquired about the frequency of private career schools closing. Dr. Dow answered that, typically, within any 12-month period, there is at least one private career school that closes. There is a variety of reasons for which a school decides to close.

### **Department of Academic Affairs – Approval of Proposed COMAR Amendments – Maryland Instructor Certification Review Board Regulations – Action Item**

**Chair Smarick** recognized Dr. Dow who introduced Ms. Alexia Van Orden, MHEC Staff Liaison to the Maryland Fire-Rescue Education Training Commission (MFRETC). Ms. Van Orden gave an overview of the Commission, which consists of volunteer & career firefighters, as well as emergency medical services personnel. The Maryland Instructor Certification Review Board (MICRB), whose regulations are being considered, was established by MFRETC for the purpose of developing and maintaining standards for instructor excellence. She then introduced the Chair of MFRETC, Mr. John Jerome, Deputy Chief of Howard County Fire and Rescue Services, who was present to answer any questions.

The proposed COMAR amendments revise the regulations for MICRB to update the edition year of the appropriate instructor standards manual, change certain instruction methods, and make minor style and language changes. Ms. Van Orden recommended that the Maryland Higher Education Commission approves for publication the proposed amendments to the Maryland Instructor Certification Review Board regulations, and authorize MHEC's attorneys to approve non-substantive revisions as necessary to conform the proposed regulations to the stylistic and formatting requirements of AELR and of the Division of State Documents. **Commissioner Seurkamp** motioned to approve and **Commissioner Brown** seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

#### **2021-2025 Maryland State Plan for Higher Education Update**

**Chair Smarick** recognized Dr. Dow who gave an update on the 2021-2025 State Plan. Dr. Dow reported that she made a presentation on the State Plan to the Student Advisory Council and the Faculty Advisory Council recently. The presentation was well-received, and she was given good feedback from both Councils. Their feedback will be incorporated into the upcoming draft (which will focus on the new priorities). The Commission will be advised when the draft is circulated for public comment, and information on public comment will be shared at the March meeting. **Commissioner Boyd** asked about the type of feedback provided by the students. Dr. Dow answered that one concern regarding student access was preparing students for a college education. Another concern was the quality of online education and the question of whether or not it was equitable.

#### **Adjournment**

**Commissioner Seurkamp** made a motion to adjourn and **Commissioner McDaniels** seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at approximately 1:56 p.m.