

Maryland Higher Education Commission
Meeting Minutes

March 23, 2022
1:00 p.m.

The Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) met on Wednesday, March 23, 2022 via video teleconference (Google Meet).

Commission members present:

Mary Pat Seurkamp, Ph.D., Chair	Charles McDaniels, Jr.
Senchal D. Barrolle, Esq.	James B. Sellinger, Sr.
Vivian S. Boyd, Ph.D.	Ray Serrano, Ph.D.
Lewis R. Brown, Ed.D.	Craig A. Williams, Ph.D.
James E. Coleman	Haleemat Y. Adekoya, Student Commissioner

Staff members present:

James D. Fielder, Ph.D.	Emily A. A. Dow, Ph.D.
Rhonda Wardlaw	Jennifer Katz
Soma Kedia	Trish Gordon McCown
Lee Towers	Donna Thomas
Everette Jackson	Jacqueline Colkley

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by **Chair Seurkamp** at approximately 1:00 p.m. A meeting quorum was established with all ten (10) members present.

Chair's Remarks

Chair Seurkamp welcomed and thanked everyone for attending today's meeting. She gave an overview of the meeting agenda.

Secretary's Remarks

Secretary Fielder reported that he attended a hearing of the Senate Executive Nominations Committee in Annapolis on March 14 during which Dr. Karen Salmon and Judge Barbara Kerr Howe appeared. MHEC is also currently in the midst of recruitment efforts for 5 new Academic Affairs staff members.

Public Comments

There were no public comments.

Commission Minutes Approval

Commissioner Sellinger motioned to approve the February 23, 2022 meeting minutes. **Commissioner Serrano** seconded the motion, and the motion was approved unanimously.

Commissioner Committee Updates

Education Policy Committee: Commissioner Boyd reported that the Committee met recently (on March 14) to review the transfer regulations. The meeting was very informative and helpful to understanding what the new regulations would entail.

Outreach, Grants, and Financial Assistance Committee: Commissioner Coleman did not have an update to share. However, the Committee will be meeting next month.

Finance and Operations Committee: Secretary Fielder reported that all of their budget hearings (during the legislative session) have concluded, and MHEC continues to fill staff vacancies in the agency.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee: Commissioner McDaniels reported that the Committee met recently in March to review their goals for the year. Committee members were pleased that MHEC was able to incorporate their suggestions into the guidelines for this year's Cultural Diversity Report. They will meet again in April and hope to develop a mission statement for the Committee.

Department of Finance and Administration – Office of Student Financial Assistance – Financial Assistance Advisory Council (FAAC): 2022 Connecting Students to Financial Aid Report – Information Item

Chair Seurkamp recognized Ms. Donna Thomas, Director of the Office of Student Financial Assistance, who asked Mr. Chris Zimmermann (Co-Chair of FAAC and Director of Financial Aid at the College of Southern Maryland) to present this item. Mr. Zimmermann informed the Commission that the Council is required to submit this report to the Maryland General Assembly each year. The report identifies ways to assist county boards with connecting students to financial aid opportunities. This includes determining best practices and compiling relevant materials and toolkits. FAAC conducted a survey of Maryland high schools to inquire about FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) and MSFAA (Maryland State Financial Aid Application) outreach. The responses revealed that, despite the efforts of high schools, parental engagement was low, and it was usually a challenge to arrange for financial aid experts to attend outreach events. Various clarifying questions were asked by the Commissioners.

Department of Finance and Administration – Office of Student Financial Assistance – Approval of Proposed Amendments to COMAR 13B.08.02.02 – Janet L. Hoffman Loan Assistance Repayment Program – Action Item

Chair Seurkamp recognized Ms. Thomas who presented this item. Under § 18-1501 et seq., of the Education Article, Annotated Code of Maryland, the Janet L. Hoffman Loan Assistance Repayment Program (Hoffman LARP) provides State assistance in the repayment of educational loans for the purpose of attracting qualified individuals to fields of employment in government and the nonprofit sector, particularly those in which there are critical manpower shortages in the State and lower salaries than in the private sector. The Hoffman LARP is governed by COMAR 13B.08.02.

In 2021, the State enacted the Blueprint for Maryland's Future—Implementation, 2021 Maryland Laws Ch. 36 (House Bill 1300 (2020)), which amended the requirements for participation in the Hoffman LARP that are set forth in Educ. § 18-1502(c). In particular, the statute was amended to expand eligibility to include public school teachers who teach fine arts subjects and to redefine the pool of eligible schools based on the percentages of students enrolled in free and reduced price lunch programs and the school's loss of Title I status.

Upon the Commission's approval, the proposed regulations and regulatory amendments will be submitted to the legislature's Joint Committee on Administrative, Executive, and Legislative Review (AELR), after which they are submitted to the Division of State Documents (DSD) for publication in the Maryland Register. After a public comment period, they may be brought back before the Commission for final adoption.

Ms. Thomas recommended that the Commission: (1) approves for publication in the Maryland Register the proposed regulatory amendments to the eligibility requirements for the Hoffman LARP; and (2) authorizes its Assistant Attorneys General to make non-substantive edits to the proposed regulations to conform to the stylistic and formatting requirements of AELR and DSD.

Commissioner Serrano inquired if there was information on who the applicants were. Ms. Thomas responded that this information was not collected. **Commissioner Serrano** suggested that the application could simply ask one or two demographic questions to determine this data. **Commissioner Boyd** made a motion for approval and **Commissioner Serrano** seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Department of Finance and Administration – Office of Student Financial Assistance – Approval of Proposed Amendments to COMAR 13B.08.10.03 – Delegate Howard P. Rawlings Educational Excellence Awards Program – Action Item

Chair Seurkamp recognized Ms. Thomas who presented this item. Under § 18-301 et seq., of the Education Article, Annotated Code of Maryland, the Delegate Howard P. Rawlings Program of Educational Excellence Awards provides need-based financial assistance to students, including through the provision of Guaranteed Access Grants. The awarding of Guaranteed Access Grants is governed by COMAR 13B.08.10.

In 2021, the Guaranteed Access Grant program was amended to allow students in grade 10 to prequalify for the Guaranteed Access Grant if they meet certain eligibility criteria, which had previously been limited to students in grades 7 through 9. The statute also was amended to establish prequalification eligibility criteria for students in grades 9 and 10.

Upon approval by the Commission, the proposed regulations and regulatory amendments are submitted to the legislature's Joint Committee on Administrative, Executive, and Legislative Review (AELR), after which they are submitted to the Division of State Documents (DSD) for publication in the Maryland Register. After a public comment period, they may be brought back before the Commission for final adoption.

Ms. Thomas recommended that the Commission: (1) approves for publication in the Maryland Register the proposed regulatory amendments to the eligibility requirements for students in grades 9 and 10 to prequalify for the Guaranteed Access Grant; and (2) authorizes its Assistant Attorneys General to make non-substantive edits to the proposed regulations to conform to the stylistic and formatting requirements of AELR and DSD.

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

Department of Finance and Administration – Office of Student Financial Assistance – Approval of Proposed New Regulations for COMAR – Teaching Fellows for Maryland Scholarship Program – Action Item

Chair Seurkamp recognized Ms. Thomas who presented this item. The Teaching Fellows for Maryland Scholarship Program provides financial assistance to Maryland students who, upon completion of an undergraduate or graduate teacher certification program, pledge to work as public school or public prekindergarten teachers at Maryland schools that have at least 50% of the students in the school eligible for free or reduced price meals (FRPM). The program waives certain eligibility requirements, such as GPA and test scores, for individuals who have been teaching assistants at a public school or public prekindergarten program in the State for at least two years.

The program offers substantial funding to these students: for students at public senior higher education institutions, 100% of the tuition, fees, room, and board for a resident undergraduate or graduate student; and, for students at private nonprofit institutions of higher education that agree to provide matching grants under this program, either 100% of the tuition and fees of a resident undergraduate or graduate at University of Maryland College Park or 50% of the tuition and fees of a resident undergraduate or graduate at the institution, whichever is less, and 100% of the room and board of a resident undergraduate or graduate student at the institution.

In light of Maryland's current teacher shortage and as part of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future—Implementation Act (2021 Maryland Laws Ch. 36), the legislature mandated increasing funding for this program from \$2,000,000 per year to \$4,000,000 for FY2022, \$8,000,000 for FY23, \$12,000,000 for FY24, and, starting in FY25, \$18,000,000 per year.

Upon approval by the Commission, the proposed regulations are submitted to the legislature's Joint Committee on Administrative, Executive, and Legislative Review (AELR), after which they are submitted to the Division of State Documents (DSD) for publication in the Maryland

Register. After a public comment period, they may be brought back before the Commission for final adoption.

Ms. Thomas recommended that the Commission: (1) approves for publication in the Maryland Register the proposed new regulations for the Teaching Fellows of Maryland Scholarship Program; and (2) authorizes its Assistant Attorneys General to make non-substantive edits to the proposed regulations to conform to the stylistic and formatting requirements of AELR and DSD.

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

Department of Academic Affairs – Approval of Proposed New Regulations and Amendments to COMAR – Transfer Between Public Institutions of Higher Education – Action Item

Chair Seurkamp recognized Dr. Emily Dow, Assistant Secretary for Academic Affairs, to present this item. Dr. Dow informed the Commission that, since their last meeting when the transfer regulations were first presented to the Commissioners, MHEC has met with various stakeholders to review the draft, including community college registrars and admissions officers. As a result, further edits were made to the draft for consistency, clarification and word usage. These changes were presented to the Education Policy Committee on March 14, 2022. To summarize, the proposed regulations repeal 9 existing MHEC regulations regarding transfer and articulation agreements, add 15 new regulations, and amend 5 existing regulations.

More specifically, the proposed regulations:

- Add a transfer evaluation and review process to implement the Transfer with Success Act.
- Distinguish the transfer of completed courses from the awarding of credits for transferred courses.
- Create new statewide standards for the substantive evaluation of transfer requests and clarify existing standards.
- More fully integrate transfer planning and articulation agreements into the Commission's Academic Program Review process.
- Create additional transparency for students.
- Add new terms and definitions and replace outdated terminology.
- Significantly reorganize the existing regulations, using clear, direct language.

Dr. Dow recommended that the Commission: (1) approves for publication in the Maryland Register the proposed new regulations and regulatory amendments regarding transfer between public institutions of higher education; and (2) authorizes its Assistant Attorneys General to make non-substantive edits to the proposed regulations to conform to the stylistic and formatting requirements of AELR and DSD.

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

Adjournment

Commissioner Coleman made a motion to adjourn and **Commissioner McDaniels** seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at approximately 1:52 p.m.