

Maryland Higher Education Commission
Meeting Minutes

May 26, 2021
1:00 p.m.

The Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) met on Wednesday, May 26, 2021 via video teleconference (GoToMeeting).

Commission members present:

Andrew R. Smarick, Chair	Charles McDaniels, Jr.
Vivian S. Boyd, Ph.D.	Sydney Miller, Student Commissioner
Lewis R. Brown, Ed.D.	Mary Pat Seurkamp, Ph.D.
James E. Coleman	John W. Yaeger, Ed.D.
Vera R. Jackson, Ph.D.	

Commission members absent:

Senchal D. Barrolle, Esq.	James B. Sellinger, Sr.
Donna M. Mitchell, Vice Chair	

Staff members present:

James D. Fielder, Ph.D.	Emily A. A. Dow, Ph.D.
Barbara Schmetz, Ph.D.	Jennifer Katz
Soma Kedia	Trish Gordon McCown
Lee Towers	Geoffrey Newman
Michael Leonard, Ph.D.	Donna Thomas
Bryson Barksdale	

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by **Chair Smarick** at approximately 1:04 p.m. A meeting quorum was established with nine (9) out of twelve (12) members present.

Chair's Remarks

Chair Smarick welcomed everyone to today's meeting and expressed the hope that all were healthy and in good spirits.

Secretary's Remarks

Secretary Fielder gave an update on the coalition case, noting that the next step will be for the Department of Legislative Services to name a consultant to work with MHEC. The consultant will come on board sometime in September, and a report will be due in December of this year.

Secretary Fielder then welcomed Dr. Barbara Schmertz, Director of the Office of Research and Policy Analysis, who introduced Dr. Michael Leonard, recently hired to fill the role of Associate Director. Dr. Leonard remarked that he was glad to be a part of MHEC. **Secretary Fielder** also welcomed Ms. Soma Kedia, Assistant Attorney General, who introduced Ms. Thuy Langrill-Miles, a law clerk who will be assisting her unit.

Commission Minutes Approval

Commissioner Coleman motioned to approve the April 28, 2021 meeting minutes, and **Commissioner Seurkamp** seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

Commissioner Committee Updates

Education Policy Committee: Commissioner Yaeger, who is Chair of the Committee, reported that there was no meeting this month. At the next meeting, they will elect a new Chair, as his term is about to end.

Outreach, Grants, and Financial Assistance Committee: Commissioner Jackson reported that there was no formal meeting recently. However, they were made aware of an overload on MDCAPS (Maryland College Aid Processing System) when too many students were on the system at once. The Office of Student Financial Assistance (OSFA) was able to work out a resolution and limit the number of users concurrently.

Finance and Operations Committee: There was no update from the Committee, as Vice Chair Mitchell was absent.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee: Chair Smarick shared that he and Secretary Fielder will be seeking members to serve on the Committee, as well as a Chair to lead it.

Student Advisory Council – Technology Grant Recommendation – Information Item

Chair Smarick recognized Dr. Emily Dow, Assistant Secretary for Academic Affairs, who introduced Mr. Kyle Dineen, an undergraduate student at the University of Maryland, College Park and Chair of the Student Advisory Council. Mr. Dineen recommended, on behalf of the Student Advisory Council, that the Maryland Higher Education Commission establish a Technology Grant for the primary purpose of increasing student access to higher education and improving student success by increasing access to either high-quality internet or technological equipment. Any student enrolled at a postsecondary institution authorized to operate in Maryland and registered for a specific academic program would be eligible. The minimum award is \$300 and the maximum is \$1,000. Grants could be used for: (a) equipment or hardware; (b) internet access; or (c) software. Students could re-apply up to 3 times for non-repetitive categories, and students demonstrating the greatest financial need (determined by information obtained from their FAFSAs) would be given prioritization. Technological access has become an issue due to the pandemic, and scholarships are generally limited to tuition and fees. Post-pandemic, this will continue to be a need and critical to ensure student access and success.

Secretary Fielder asked if the Student Advisory Council had a suggestion for funding source. Mr. Dineen requested that MHEC approach the Governor's Office about the allotment of funding. **Commissioner McDaniels** inquired how such an opportunity would be publicized to the student body. Mr. Dineen answered that the schools themselves would make their students aware of the opportunity, since many students go directly to their institutions to request assistance.

Student Advisory Council – 2020-2021 Annual Report – Information Item

Chair Smarick recognized Mr. Dineen to present the 2020-2021 Student Advisory Council Annual Report. Mr. Dineen highlighted several items from this document, including a recommendation presented to the Commission last year regarding accessibility for voting and presentations by the Maryland Department of Health about contact tracing and mental health resources. Their key goals for next year include continued efforts to promote Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) endeavors, addressing various issues of accessibility, and seeking better understanding of higher education funding in Maryland.

Department of Finance and Administration – Office of Student Financial Assistance – Final Adoption of Amendments to COMAR Financial Aid Regulations – Delegate Howard P. Rawlings Educational Excellence Awards Program – Action Item

Chair Smarick recognized Ms. Donna Thomas (MHEC's Director of the Office of Student Financial Assistance) who presented this item. On February 24, 2021, the Commission approved for publication in the Maryland Register proposed amendments to the regulations for the Delegate Howard P. Rawlings Educational Excellence Awards Program. The purpose of these amendments is primarily to add a new process for institutional verification of Guaranteed Access Grants, as required by statute. The regulations also add an additional appeal criterion for late FAFSA filers, clarify the recipient selection priority, and replace the term "alternate application" with "MSFAA" throughout the regulations. The proposed regulations were published in the Maryland Register on April 9, 2021. The public comment period for the regulations ended on May 10, 2021, and no public comments were received.

The proposed amendments to the regulations are ready for the Commission's final adoption, with a non-substantive change to the text of Regulation .08B to correct a single word, as reflected in tracked changes in the attached copy of the regulations. The amendments will become effective 10 days after notice of the final adoption is published in the Maryland Register.

Ms. Thomas recommended that the Commission approve for final adoption the proposed amendments to the regulations for the Delegate Howard P. Rawlings Educational Excellence Awards Program, including the non-substantive change reflected in the attached text.

Commissioner Jackson made a motion to approve, and **Commissioner McDaniels** seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

Department of Finance and Administration – Office of Student Financial Assistance – Approval of Proposed Amendments to COMAR Financial Aid Regulations – Richard W. Collins III Leadership with Honor Scholarship Program – Action Item

Chair Smarick recognized Ms. Thomas who reported that during the 2021 session, the legislature passed House Bill 1124/Senate Bill 40 to amend the Richard W. Collins III Leadership with Honor Scholarship Program. The program awards scholarships to ROTC members at the state's four HBCUs.

Currently, 25% of total funds for the scholarship are allocated for students at Bowie State University and 75% of the funds are allocated for students at the University of Maryland Eastern Shore, Coppin State University, and Morgan State University. The legislative changes the allocation so that *at least* 25% of the total funds are for students at Bowie State University and the remaining funds after awarding all eligible Bowie State University students are for students at the other three institutions. Additionally, the amendments include a change to the application deadline to facilitate earlier awarding and the deletion of an obsolete provision.

Upon approval, 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 approve for publication in the Maryland Register the proposed regulatory amendments to the Richard W. Collins III Leadership with Honor Scholarship Program and authorize 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.

Secretary Fielder asked the number of recipients. Ms. Thomas replied that during the 2020-2021 academic year, more than 50 students received this award. Amounts averaged over \$5,000. **Commissioner Boyd** made a motion to approve for publication the proposed amendments, and **Commissioner Coleman** seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

Adjournment

Commissioner Seurkamp made a motion to adjourn and **Commissioner Coleman** seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at approximately 1:50 p.m.