

Maryland Higher Education Commission
Meeting Minutes

February 23, 2022
1:00 p.m.

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

Commission members present:

Mary Pat Seurkamp, Ph.D., Chair	James E. Coleman
Vivian S. Boyd, Ph.D.	Ray Serrano, Ph.D.
Lewis R. Brown, Ed.D.	Haleemat Y. Adekoya, Student Commissioner

Commission members absent:

Senchal D. Barrolle, Esq.	James B. Sellinger, Sr.
Charles McDaniels, Jr.	Craig A. Williams, Ph.D.

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	Donna Thomas
Rhonda Wardlaw	

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by **Chair Seurkamp** at approximately 1:04 p.m. A meeting quorum was established with six (6) out of ten (10) members present.

Chair's Remarks

Chair Seurkamp thanked everyone for making the time to attend today's meeting and welcomed members of the public in attendance.

Secretary's Remarks

Secretary Fielder reported that MHEC is in the midst of bill and budget hearings. More than half of the legislative session has passed. Additionally, the Governor's recent "Green Bag" appointments included two new Commissioners, Ms. Barbara Kerr Howe (retired Circuit Court Judge for Baltimore County) and Dr. Karen Salmon (retired State Superintendent of Schools). MHEC has also started to meet with the consultant NCHEMS (National Center for Higher

Education Management Systems) selected by the Department of Legislative Services (DLS) to evaluate their academic program review process.

Public Comments

There were no public comments.

Commission Minutes Approval

Commissioner Serrano motioned to approve the January 26, 2022 meeting minutes. **Commissioner Adekoya** seconded the motion, and the motion was approved unanimously.

Commissioner Committee Updates

Education Policy Committee: Commissioner Boyd reported that the Committee will be meeting on Monday, March 14 to discuss in detail the transfer regulations (later reviewed during today's meeting). All are welcome to attend.

Outreach, Grants, and Financial Assistance Committee: Commissioner Coleman asked Commissioner Adekoya to present today's update. She reported that MHEC has been working with the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) and College Bound to promote the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) and MSFAA (Maryland State Financial Aid Application) to high school students. Several social media outlets are used to promote MHEC's financial aid programs. Additionally, new podcasts about various scholarships and opportunities are produced every two weeks. **Commissioner Adekoya** also shared that MHEC has been working with the Anne Arundel County Department of Social Services to promote various scholarship opportunities to the families they serve.

Finance and Operations Committee: Mr. Geoffrey Newman, Assistant Secretary for Finance and Administration and staff contact for the Committee, reported that several budget hearings have taken place already, which have gone relatively well, and there are a few more to go. He also reported that the agency continues to actively fill vacant positions.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee: Commissioner Serrano reported that the Committee did not meet recently, so there was no update at this time. **Secretary Fielder** thanked the Committee for their recommendations so far, which have informed the guidelines to institutions for the annual Cultural Diversity Report.

Departments of Academic Affairs and Finance & Administration – Final Adoption of COMAR Amendments – Workforce Development Sequence Scholarship – Action Item

Chair Seurkamp recognized Dr. Emily Dow (Assistant Secretary for Academic Affairs) and Ms. Donna Thomas (Director of the Office of Student Financial Assistance) to present this item. Ms. Thomas reported that on November 17, 2021, the Commission approved proposed amendments to the regulations for the Workforce Development Sequence Scholarship, which provides financial support to students who enroll in a group of noncredit courses at community

colleges that, rather than leading to a degree, are related to job preparation, a registered apprenticeship, licensure, certification, or job skill enhancement. The purpose of the amendments is to incorporate changes to the definition of “eligible student” that were passed during the 2021 Session (HB 905/SB 845), add a certain date by which community colleges get notification of their annual allocation amount, and delete several unnecessary and obsolete references.

The proposed amendments were published in the Maryland Register on January 3, 2022. The public comment period for the amendments ended on February 2, 2022, and no public comments were received. The regulatory amendments became eligible for final adoption on February 18, 2022.

The proposed amendments to the regulations are ready for the Commission’s final adoption. 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 approves for final adoption the proposed amendments to the regulations regarding the Workforce Development Sequence Scholarship. **Commissioner Boyd** made a motion for approval and **Commissioner Coleman** seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Department of Academic Affairs – Draft New COMAR Regulations and Amendments to COMAR – Transferring between Public Institutions of Higher Education – Information Item

Chair Seurkamp recognized Dr. Dow who presented this item. Dr. Dow explained that, in 2021, the Maryland General Assembly passed the Transfer with Success Act (HB 460/SB 886), which amended § 11-207 of the Education Article, Annotated Code of Maryland. This legislation created a new requirement for public institutions to jointly review credits or courses that are denied when a student transfers from one public institution to another. Additionally, the legislation created a new annual reporting requirement: institutions are now obligated to submit to the Commission a report listing all denials over the course of each year, including the reasons for each denial.

MHEC convened a workgroup of various stakeholders that started in the summer of 2021 and worked continuously to review and rewrite transfer regulations to create a process for institutions to comply with the new statutory requirements.

In the course of discussion regarding the Transfer with Success Act, it became apparent that MHEC’s existing regulations regarding transfer were in need of significant changes. Accordingly, over the course of the last six months, draft new regulations have been crafted to revise and replace the existing regulations. These draft regulations reflect several additional changes in an effort to fully support transfer students and clarify statewide processes and expectations.

Dr. Dow presented some highlights of the draft regulations:

- Reflect new requirements to implement the Transfer with Success Act.
- Reflect a significant reorganization of the existing regulations, using language that is clear and direct.
- Reflect substantive changes to standardize transfer standards and processes.
- Reflect additional minor but substantive changes.

Next steps include drafting a guidance document for institutions regarding the new draft regulations. (Implementation is likely to be challenging for public institutions, in terms of human resources, etc.) New legislation that is currently being debated in the Maryland General Assembly is also being taken into consideration. The Education Policy Committee will be meeting on Monday, March 14 to discuss the draft new regulations in further detail. Commissioners are encouraged to attend this meeting. Subsequently, any submitted input will be considered, and the proposed regulations will be finalized and presented to the Commission for approval at the March 23, 2022 Commission meeting.

Department of Academic Affairs – Report on Institutions of Higher Education Program Review: Secretary Actions for Quarter 3 (July 1, 2021 – September 30, 2021) – Information Item

Chair Seurkamp recognized Ms. Trish Gordon McCown, Director of Academic Affairs, who presented this item. Ms. McCown provided an overview of the Secretary’s actions concerning program objections, new degree programs, new certificate programs, new areas of concentration, substantial modifications to existing programs, non-substantial modifications to existing programs, a proposal withdrawn, institutional program partnerships, proposals not approved or recommended, out-of-state institutions, online registration institutions, Academic Common Market certifications, and Unique Major reviews.

Department of Academic Affairs – Report on Private Career Schools: Secretary Actions for Quarter 3 (July 1, 2021 – September 30, 2021) – Information Item

Ms. McCown provided an overview of the Secretary’s actions concerning a substantial program modification, a workforce development sequence scholarship approval, and training provider questionnaires.

Department of Academic Affairs – Report on VA Education Benefits: MD SAA Actions for Quarter 3 – July 1, 2021 – September 30, 2021 (Quarter 4 based on the federal fiscal year) – Information Item

Ms. McCown provided an overview of the Maryland State Approving Agency’s actions concerning program approval actions, other approval actions, visits to facilities, technical assistance actions, and liaison activities.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at approximately 2:20 p.m.