

**Maryland Higher Education Commission**  
Meeting Minutes

September 13, 2023  
10:00 a.m.

The Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) met on Wednesday, September 13, 2023 in the 7<sup>th</sup> floor boardroom at the Nancy S. Grasmick State Education Building (200 West Baltimore Street, Baltimore, MD 21201). The meeting was also livestreamed (and recorded), and some meeting participants (Commissioners and others with speaking roles) joined virtually.

**Commission members present:**

Catherine J. “Cassie” Motz, Chair	Rebecca Taber Staehelin
Chike Aguh	Sheila D. Thompson, Ph.D.
Mickey L. Burnim, Ph.D.	Craig A. Williams, Ph.D.
Barbara Kerr Howe	Janet E. Wormack, Ed.D.
Ray Serrano, Ph.D.	Cierra M. Robinson, Student Commissioner

**Commission member absent:**

Charlene Mickens Dukes, Ed.D.	
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**Staff members present:**

Sanjay Rai, Ph.D.	Emily A. A. Dow, Ph.D.
Geoffrey Newman	Soma Kedia
Anthony Reiner	Barbara Schmertz, Ph.D.
Derrick Coley	Rhonda Wardlaw
Glenda Abney	Deborah Ing
Yuxin Lin, Ph.D.	Parris Jackson

**Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order by **Chair Motz** at approximately 10:05 a.m. A meeting quorum was established with ten (10) out of eleven (11) members present.

**Chair’s Remarks**

**Chair Motz** welcomed everyone, particularly guests, to today’s meeting to hear presentations from Maryland’s higher education segments. She asked the Commissioners to introduce themselves, and she gave an overview of the meeting agenda.

**Public Comments**

There were no public comments.

## **Department of Finance and Administration – Operating and Capital Budget Presentations – Information Items**

**Chair Motz** welcomed all the representatives from the various segments of higher education who are here today to present their budget plans for fiscal year 2025. The Commission has a responsibility to review the budgets of all higher education segments. Institutions will also explain how their priorities and budgets align with the State Plan, as well as answer any questions submitted ahead of time by the Commissioners.

### **University System of Maryland**

Ms. Ellen Herbst, Senior Vice Chancellor for Administration and Finance, and Dr. Alison Wrynn, Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs, presented the USM Operating and Capital Budget to the Commission. The presentation is available for review.

### **St. Mary's College of Maryland**

Dr. Katherine Gantz, Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean of Faculty, and Mr. Paul Pusecker, Vice President for Business & Chief Financial Officer, presented the St. Mary's College of Maryland Operating and Capital Budget to the Commission. The presentation is available for review.

### **Morgan State University**

Dr. David Wilson, President, and Mr. David LaChina, Interim Executive Vice President for Finance and Administration, presented the Morgan State University Operating and Capital Budget to the Commission. The presentation is available for review.

### **Maryland Association of Community Colleges**

Dr. Brad Phillips, Executive Director, presented the Maryland Association of Community Colleges Operating and Capital Budget to the Commission. The presentation is available for review.

### **Break 12:30 – 12:40 PM.**

### **Baltimore City Community College**

Dr. Debra McCurdy, President, Mr. Aubrey Bascombe, Vice President for Finance and Administration, Mr. Michael Thomas, Vice President for Workforce and Continuing Education, and Ms. Eileen Hawkins, Director of Institutional Research, presented the Baltimore City Community College Operating and Capital Budget to the Commission. The presentation is available for review.

## **Regional Higher Education Centers**

Mr. Geoffrey Newman, MHEC's Assistant Secretary for Finance and Administration, along with the Center Directors, presented the Regional Higher Education Centers' Operating and Capital Budget to the Commission. The Directors present were Mr. Justin Sayre of the Universities of La Plata, Ms. Marcella Leach of the Eastern Shore Higher Education Center, and Mr. Marcus Wright of the Anne Arundel Community College at Arundel Mills Higher Education Center. The presentation is available for review.

## **Maryland Independent College and University Association**

Mr. Matthew Power, President, presented the Maryland Independent College and University Association Operating and Capital Budget to the Commission. The presentation is available for review.

**Break 2:15 – 2:20 PM.**

## **Review Meeting – Proposal of Stevenson University for a Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) Degree Program**

(Present, both in-person and virtually, were 9 out of 11 total Commissioners. A quorum was met. Those present at the review meeting included: Aguh, Burnim, Howe, Motz, Robinson, Serrano, Taber Staehelin, Thompson, and Wormack. Dukes and Williams were absent.)

**Chair Motz** gave an overview of the review meeting. Stevenson University (SU) proposed a Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) program, which was later recommended for implementation by MHEC's Assistant Secretary for Academic Affairs. The University of Maryland Eastern Shore (UMES) and the University of Maryland Baltimore (UMB) both objected and requested a review of the decision by the Commission.

**Chair Motz** recognized Dr. Emily Dow, MHEC's Assistant Secretary for Academic Affairs, to present her rationale for her decision. A careful analysis by agency staff revealed that duplication did exist. (The program objectives are similar.) However, the duplication was reasonable for several reasons. Market demand for DPT programs in Maryland is high. There is also unmet market demand for graduates of DPT programs. Additionally, SU's role in Maryland higher education, as a private institution, is distinct. Dr. Dow cited as well the recent retraction of a 2021 letter by ACAPT (American Council of Academic Physical Therapy), which urged institutions to limit the growth of DPT programs. The proposed program by Stevenson University would, therefore, not cause demonstrable harm to the existing programs at UMES and UMB. The Commissioners asked questions of Dr. Dow.

**Chair Motz** recognized USM's Dr. Wrynn who urged that future changes to the academic program review process be made with the students in mind. Dr. Bruce Jarrell, President of the University of Maryland Baltimore, asked the Commissioners to oppose Stevenson University's proposed program and overturn the decision made by the Assistant Secretary. Dr. Roger Ward, UMB's Provost, noted that their institution is focused on graduate and professional education.

The proposed program would cause demonstrable harm to UMB's program. SU's program could not be successful without directly competing with them for resources, particularly faculty and clinical sites. Dr. Victoria Marchese, Chair of the Department of Physical Therapy and Rehabilitative Science, added that the current supply of physical therapists is outpacing demand. The Commissioners asked questions about UMB's presentation.

**Chair Motz** recognized Dr. Heidi Anderson, President of the University of Maryland Eastern Shore, who urged the Commission to overturn the Assistant Secretary's decision. Dr. Michael Rabel, Professor and Chair of the Department of Physical Therapy, noted that theirs was a unique, high-demand program. However, there is already a projected surplus of physical therapists without adding new programs. Additionally, there have been attempts to work with SU, but their efforts to reach out received no response. Dr. Tadas Vasaitis, Assistant Dean, cited an overall shortage of faculty that would be exacerbated with the addition of SU's program in the state. The Commissioners asked questions about UMES's presentation.

**Chair Motz** recognized Dr. Dow for rebuttal comments. The Assistant Secretary noted that the licensing data provided today were not available at the time of her review and decision.

**Chair Motz** recognized UMB for responsive remarks. Dr. Jarrell remarked that they chose not to expand their program due to decreased demand. Dr. Marchese added that they currently have only 24 individuals on their wait list.

**Chair Motz** recognized UMES for responsive remarks. Dr. Rabel reported that they have not had a waitlist for the past 2 years. In addition, they have not been able to fill their recent cohort completely.

**Chair Motz** recognized Dr. Elliot Hirshman, President of Stevenson University, who stated that their proposed program is not unreasonably duplicative of the existing programs and urged the Commission to affirm the decision of the Assistant Secretary. Dr. Hannah Hughes, Dean of the School of Nursing & Health Professions, remarked that there is a demand for physical therapists in the state and nationally. Dr. Susan Gorman, Provost, added that there are not enough physical therapists to meet demand. There are many unfilled jobs. Ms. Antionette Marbray, Vice President of Legal Affairs and Government Relations, highlighted the need for physical therapists in their particular community. Dr. Merrie Durmowicz, Dean of the School of the Sciences, noted that they have secured clinical placements from sites that do not currently work with UMB and UMES. The Commissioners asked questions about SU's presentation.

**Chair Motz** remarked that the Commission will now go into a closed session for the purpose of carrying out an administrative function and to receive legal advice. **Commissioner Burnim** made a motion and **Commissioner Thompson** seconded the motion to go into a closed session. **Chair Motz** called the roll:

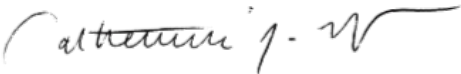
Aguh – YES  
Burnim – YES  
Howe – YES  
Robinson – YES

Serrano – YES  
Taber Staehelin – YES  
Thompson – YES  
Wormack – YES  
Motz – YES

**Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at approximately 4:45 PM.

Approved by the Commission:

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Catherine J. Motz", written over a horizontal line.

Catherine J. "Cassie" Motz, Chair

*Attachment to the Open Session Minutes of the Commission's September 13, 2023 Meeting*

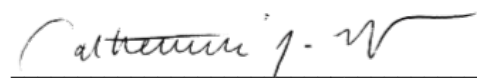
CLOSED SESSION: During the Maryland Higher Education Commission's regular meeting on September 13, 2023, at 10:00 a.m., held in the 7<sup>th</sup> floor boardroom of the Nancy S. Grasmick Education Building, 200 W. Baltimore St., Baltimore, Maryland, with some Commissioners joining virtually via video conference, the Commission voted to move into closed session. Pursuant to §§ 3-301(a) and 3-305(b)(7) of the General Provisions Article, Annotated Code of Maryland, and upon motion of Commissioner Howe, seconded by Commissioner Wormack, and with unanimous agreement of the Commissioners present, the Commissioners met in closed session on Wednesday, September 13, 2023, in person, in a conference room adjoining the 7<sup>th</sup> floor boardroom, for the purpose of reviewing an academic program proposal pursuant to Title 11 of the Education Article, Annotated Code of Maryland and to receive legal advice from counsel regarding academic program review. The following Commission members were not present for the vote: Charlene Dukes and Craig Williams.

The Executive Session commenced at approximately 4:45 p.m. In attendance in person at closed session were Commissioners Cassie Motz, Chike Aguh, Mickey Burnim, Barbara Howe, Sheila Thompson, and Janet Wormack; and Assistant Attorney General Soma Kedia. Commissioners Ray Serrano, Rebecca Taber Staehelin, and Cierra Robinson joined the closed session by phone.

The topic of discussion at the closed session was the Assistant Secretary's decision to recommend for implementation Stevenson University's proposed Doctorate in Physical Therapy program under COMAR 13B.02.03.28. The Commission also received legal advice on the criteria for program review in COMAR 13B.02.03. The action taken during the closed session was to overturn the Assistant Secretary's decision to recommend the proposed degree program.

The action was approved by seven Commissioners. The motion to overturn the Acting Secretary's decision was made by Commissioner Howe and seconded by Commissioner Burnim. The following Commissioners voted in favor of the motion: Chike Aguh, Mickey Burnim, Barbara Howe, Cassie Motz, Cierra Robinson, Sheila Thompson, and Janet Wormack. Commissioner Ray Serrano voted against the motion. Commissioner Rebecca Taber Staehelin abstained. The Closed Session ended at approximately 5:45 p.m.

Approved by the Commission:

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Catherine J. Motz", written over a horizontal line.

Catherine J. "Cassie" Motz, Chair