

Minutes of the Education Achievement Council Meeting

June 5, 2014

BE IT REMEMBERED, that the Education Achievement Council (EAC) met in the Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning Board Room in Jackson, Mississippi at 11:00 a.m. on June 5, 2014.

Council Members Present:

Dr. Thomas Burke representing Dr. Rodney Bennett, President, University of Southern Mississippi
Dr. Jim Borsig, President, Mississippi University for Women
Dr. Glenn Boyce, President, Holmes Community College
Ms. La Shon Brooks representing Dr. William Bynum, President, Mississippi Valley State University
Mr. Lee Bush, Board Member, Mississippi Community College Board
Dr. Eric Clark, Executive Director, Mississippi Community College Board
Chairman Herb Frierson, Chairman, House of Representatives Appropriations Committee
Chairman Nolan Mettetal, Chairman, House of Representatives Universities and Colleges Committee
Chairman John Moore, Chairman, House of Representatives Education Committee
Dr. Ronnie Nettles, President, Copiah-Lincoln Community College
Chairman John Polk, Chairman, Senate Universities and Colleges Committee
Chairman Gray Tollison, Chairman, Senate Education Committee
Vicki Powell representing Mr. Blake Wilson, President and Chief Executive Officer, Mississippi Economic Council
Jeanne Massey representing Dr. Carey Wright, State Superintendent, Mississippi Department of Education

Council Members Not Present:

Mr. Ed Blakeslee, Trustee, Institutions of Higher Learning
Dr. Hank Bounds, Commissioner of Higher Education, Institutions of Higher Learning
Chairman Eugene Clarke, Chairman, Senate Appropriations Committee
Mr. Chip Crane, Board Member, Mississippi Community College Board
Mr. Michael Jordan, Director, Division of Professional Development, MS Department of Mental Health
Ms. Robin Robinson, Trustee, Institutions of Higher Learning
Dr. Jesse Smith, President, Jones County Junior College
Dr. Laurie Smith, Education Policy Advisor, Office of Governor Phil Bryant

Others Present:

Ms. Caron Blanton, Communications Director, Institutions of Higher Learning
Ms. Kim Gallaspy, Director of Legislative Services, Institutions of Higher Learning
Dr. Joan Haynes, Assoc. Executive Director, MS Community College Board
Dr. John Hilpert, Interim Associate Commissioner for Academic and Student Affairs, Institutions of Higher Learning

Dr. Jim Hood, Director of Strategic Data Management, Institutions of Higher Learning
Ms. Clotee Lewis, Coordinator of Public Affairs, Institutions of Higher Learning
Ms. Jennifer Rogers, Director of Student Financial Aid, Office of Student Financial Aid
Mr. Kell Smith, Director of Communications and Legislative Services, MS Community College Board
Mr. Pete Walley, Director of Economic Planning Bureau, Institutions of Higher Learning
Dr. Jimmy Clarke, Lumina Foundation Strategy Labs via teleconference
Mr. Pete Smith, Communications Director, MS Department of Education

I. Welcome

Dr. Jim Borsig opened the meeting and welcomed participants. He explained that this meeting takes the place of the meeting originally scheduled for April. The April meeting was postponed due to a change in the schedule of the IHL Board of Trustees meeting which was scheduled on the same day.

II. Approval of Minutes

Dr. Borsig asked members to review the minutes from the January 23, 2014 meeting. Dr. Ronnie Nettles moved that the minutes be approved. Mr. Lee Bush seconded the motion. The motion carried.

III. Update on Student Financial Aid Changes

Dr. Borsig reminded the members that the Council proposed several ambitious changes to the state financial aid statutes prior to the 2014 Legislative Session. He expressed appreciation to the Legislators present for their support which helped the Council find success on some proposals. Dr. Borsig called on Ms. Jennifer Rogers, Director of State Financial Aid, to present a report on the changes made to financial aid.

All 2014 legislative changes to state student financial aid were included in Senate Bill 2499.

Recommendation #1: Remove the Pell exclusion to make Mississippi Resident Tuition Assistance Grants (MTAG) available to the state's neediest students.

Update: The recommendation was projected to cost an additional \$28 million during the first year of implementation, which was determined to be too costly.

Recommendation #2: Increase the maximum family income threshold for eligibility for the Higher Education Legislative Plan for Needy Students (HELP) grant from \$36,500 to \$46,500.

Recommendation #3: Move application deadlines for the HELP grant from March 31 for the online application and April 30 for supporting documents to September 15 for the online application and October 15 for supporting documents. Doing so will align the deadlines with the deadlines used for the other undergraduate grant programs, MTAG and the Mississippi Eminent Scholars Grant (MESG).

Recommendation #4: Simplify the documentation required for the HELP grant by requiring only one year of residency documentation and one year of financial data; by requiring only the FAFSA for financial documentation in lieu of tax forms; and by requiring high school counselors to certify a student's completion of the HELP core curriculum.

Update: Recommendations #2-4 were projected to cost as much as \$21 million during the first year, which was determined to be too costly. To incrementally grow the program at a more sustainable rate, the family income threshold was instead increased to \$39,500 beginning in 2015-16 and to \$42,500 beginning in 2016-2017. These incremental increases will require additional funding beginning in FY16. Although the application deadline was not moved back to September to allow for more applicants, the supporting documentation was simplified. Beginning with the next application period, applicants will be asked to submit only one year of residency and one year of income documentation. The Office of Student Financial Aid will also be working with MDE to facilitate an easier way for counselors to certify completion of the HELP core curriculum.

Recommendation #5: Limit MESH award amounts to not exceed the cost of attendance.

Update: While this recommendation found support in the Senate, the House strongly rejected this recommendation.

Recommendation #6: Clarify language regarding the eligibility of students to receive MESH who attend college out-of-state first, but transfer back to a Mississippi institution.

Update: The eligibility language was clarified to allow students to complete up to 36 credit hours out of state before transferring back to a Mississippi institution.

Recommendation #7: Consolidate code sections and create a central authorizing body for all state aid programs.

Update: Nine chapters of Mississippi code were consolidated into a single section. All state-supported student financial aid programs are now authorized by *Miss. Code Ann.* §37-106-1 through §37-106-79. The Postsecondary Education Financial Assistance Board was expanded from three members to nine members. The expanded Board will include two public university appointees, two community college appointees, two private college appointees, two appointees by the Governor, and one appointee by the Lt. Governor. In addition, the chairmen of the House and Senate Universities and Colleges committees will serve as advisory members to the Board. Once appointments are made, the Board will be convened for an orientation and the first meeting will be scheduled soon after. The consolidation legislation also provides funding guidance, sets consistent residency and dependency rules, and sets consistent loan repayment rules.

Recommendation #8: Extend the charge of the State Financial Aid Study Committee to design a financial aid program to encourage adults to complete a degree and/or return for work-force education that allows for part-time enrollment.

Update: Any new financial aid program would be costly to create and implement. The existing state aid programs were underfunded for FY15. Additional funding will be needed in FY16 and FY17 to implement the HELP changes passed this year. Several study committee recommendations were not heeded due to the projected cost. For these cost-related reasons, the study committee has not moved forward with efforts to design an additional state financial aid program.

Other Changes: In addition to the financial aid changes recommended by the Education Achievement Council, other financial aid changes were included in SB 2499.

- The bill establishes a maintenance GPA of 2.5 for students receiving the Law Enforcement Officers and Firemen Scholarship (LAW).
- The bill phases out the Critical Needs Teacher Education loan program. The Office will make new awards for the last time in 2014-15. Renewal awards will be made until students max out of the program.
- The bill creates two new programs, the Mississippi Teaching Fellows Program and the Teacher Education Alternate Route Certification Scholars Program, which are both slated to begin in 2015-16.

Regarding recommendation #8, Dr. Glenn Boyce encouraged further study of programs to assist non-traditional students, as attracting these students are essential to achieving the state's attainment goals.

Dr. Borsig proposed that a committee be formed to study assistance for adult, part-time, and technical students. With the available data, the committee could look at various options and model a fiscal note for each.

After discussion of the importance of non-traditional students to the state economy, there was consensus to form the study committee. Dr. Borsig asked for volunteers and suggested that Dr. Bounds and Dr. Clark recommend staff members from each system to participate. Mr. Lee Bush and Ms. Vicki Powell volunteered to serve on the committee.

IV. Developing Productivity/Outcomes Report for the Public Postsecondary Sector

Dr. Borsig referred to the PowerPoint presentation in the minutes of the last meeting regarding outcomes pulled from National Clearinghouse data. He and Dr. Jesse Smith met with the Institutional Research staff for IHL and MCCB to develop a method of reporting a clear picture of the graduation rates at Mississippi institutions. They selected Academic Year 2007 as a starting point and will use IHL MIS and Lifetracks data to capture a six-year cohort graduation rate that tracks every student in the system. They plan to map the progress of students from that year using the methodology used by the National Clearinghouse. The result will be the best calculation of productivity in Mississippi.

They expect to complete work by October 2014 in time for presentation at the Mississippi Association of Colleges (MAC) Conference in Columbus.

Dr. Boyce noted the importance of this work as there are gaps in the data available to policy makers. In addition, correct data is important to the work of the Education Achievement Council. He encouraged the Council to move forward in this effort.

Dr. Borsig proposed providing an interim report to the Council in August with a final report to be presented at the MAC conference in October.

Chairman John Moore moved that the Council proceed with developing a productivity/outcomes report for Mississippi. Dr. Clark seconded the motion. The motion carried.

V. Update on Schedule for 2014 Report Cards

Dr. Borsig called on Dr. Boyce to give an update on the Community College report cards.

Dr. Boyce noted that the Community Colleges now have three sets of report cards completed and are working to prepare the next report card by November. Recent changes to the developmental education curriculum will require some metrics to change on the next report card. Going forward, the Community Colleges will continue to examine the metrics to make sure the data is strong and consistent across the colleges. The colleges are submitting their data to the Mississippi Community College Board office for review and audit before submitting it to nSPARC. He said the extra work to verify the metrics and data will make the upcoming report cards the most accurate to date.

Dr. Borsig called on Dr. Jim Hood to present an update on the IHL report cards.

Dr. Hood said the next IHL report cards will be finalized by October 3 for presentation to the IHL Board of Trustees. Once approved by the Board of Trustees the report cards will be published by October 31. He said work will be done to revise the metrics so they reflect the metrics used in the IHL performance allocation model.

VI. Clarification of EAC Statute

Dr. Borsig called on Dr. Clark to discuss the clarification of publication requirements.

Dr. Clark explained that it is unclear if Mississippi Code Ann. § 37-163-1 requires publication of the report cards in newspapers of general circulation, or if publishing notice of the report card along with a link to the website is sufficient. He said Chuck Rubisoff, the Assistant Attorney General assigned to the Mississippi Community College Board, recommended that the Council clarify what is required and include the decision in the minutes.

Dr. Clark recommended that the Council prescribe that notice of the report is required to be published in the newspaper and the full report is to be made available on the websites.

Chairman Moore said he believes the intent of the Legislature was to provide a way to notify the public that the report cards were available and that providing notice with a link to a website where the public could access the report card would be sufficient.

Chairman Moore moved to adopt Dr. Clark's recommendation that notice of the report be published in the newspaper and the full report is to be made available on the websites. Dr. Clark seconded the motion. The motion carried.

VII. Other Business

Dr. Clark shared with the Council that Phi Theta Kappa has established the Community College Completion Corp (C4), a program to encourage students to commit to completing their Associate degree and encouraging at least one other student to do so. All fifteen Community Colleges are participating in this initiative. Dr. Clark said Dr. Billy Stewart, president of East Central Mississippi Community College, is leading the initiative and suggested inviting Dr. Stewart to attend the next meeting to discuss the campaign.

Chairman Moore urged IHL and Community College leaders to carefully consider the effort to amend the state constitution to require full funding of the Mississippi Adequate Education Program funding model. He said adoption of the ballot initiative would force the Legislature to make drastic cuts to other programs or to increase taxes to comply. He said the impact on higher education budgets would be severe.

VIII. Upcoming Meetings

The next meeting of the Education Achievement Council will be held on Thursday, August 28 at 11:00 a.m. The final scheduled meeting of 2014 will be held on October 23.

IX. Adjourn

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.