



**Minutes of the Colorado Commission on Higher Education (CCHE) Meeting
Virtual
February 2, 2024**

BUSINESS MEETING

Vice Chair Scott called the business meeting to order at 1:00 pm.

I. Opening Business

A. Attendance

Commissioners attending: Chair Hughes, Vice Chair Scott, Commissioners Gonzales, Harber, Kostenbauer, Meyer, Temu-Otting, Tucker, Walmer, and Wilson, Executive Director Paccione

Advisors attending: Mark Cavanaugh, Michael Lightner, Mark Superka, Colleen O'Neil, Jamie Viefhaus-Zak

B. Approval of the Minutes for the December 7, 2023 Commission Meeting

Commissioner Harber moved to approve the February 2nd minutes. Seconded by Commissioner Tucker. The motion was approved.

C. Reports

1. Chair - Chair Hughes was not able to report. She joined virtually and was having reception issues
2. Vice Chair - Vice Chair Scott thanked the department for the presentation in the work session today. He found the presentation very informative, helpful, and well presented by the staff.
3. Commission Standing Committees
 - a. Student Success & Workforce Alignment – Commissioner Abramson was excused from today's meeting. Vice Chair Scott read a report provided by Commissioner Abramson, which noted that there were no major updates. The committee continues to work on stackable credentials and there are a few agenda items associated with this work going before the commission today.
 - b. Finance, Performance & Accountability - Commissioner Tucker reported that this group met recently for the first time in about a month or more. They had some discussion on the capital review process that included an update from Kennedy Evans, Lead Finance Analyst. They spent most of their time brainstorming a better process for budget requests that is more in sync with the timelines from the Governor and JBC making evaluations. He shared that it



seems we are always late in this process and that leaves opportunity for improvement.

- c. HB22-1349 Technical Workgroup Update – Vice Chair Scott reported that this group has continued to meet monthly and is moving toward a focus on opportunities associated with the longitudinal data system. In coming meetings, this group looks forward to hearing from other states about achievements and challenges as they have developed their own longitudinal data systems. This committee is making the most of learning everything they can from the states that have gone through this process before them. Vice Chair Scott mentioned that he continues to be appreciative of this collective group and the leadership provided by Emily House and the ESG team.
- d. Transfer Ad Hoc Subcommittee- Commissioner Abramson was excused from today’s meeting. Vice Chair Scott read a report provided by Commissioner Abramson. This group is working on a series of recommendations to the Commission, Department, and the State. They have support in piloting a platform that allows students and IHEs to review opportunities to transfer credits into various IHEs and programs. They are still working on getting a 4-year IHE to participate in the pilot for this platform. They have had some interest and some pushback with a consensus on the need for more guidance with a recommendation. Commissioner Wilson thanked Vice Chair Scott for delivering Commissioner Abramson’s report in his absence.

4. Commissioners.

- a. **Commissioner Harber** thanked the group from the department that presented during the work session prior to this meeting. He found it very informative and helpful. He recommended that they add a focus on how to get more money for the students and help students and families make better financial decisions because then they may not need more money. Commissioner Harber also mentioned the changes that are coming regarding unpaid internships and how these changes may affect small businesses and students alike. He also agreed with Commissioner Kostenbauer that the guidance around this topic changes often. He also offered that internships with for profit companies should always be paid but internships for Non-profit organizations can be unpaid.
- b. **Commissioner Kostenbauer** responded to Commissioner Harber’s comments about the changes to unpaid internships. She mentioned that he brought very good points in this debate. She also mentioned that unpaid internships present legal jeopardies because you cannot have students “working” for free. Legally, work has to be paid.
- c. **Commissioner Meyer** commented regarding the unpaid internships that he thinks it is a mutual loss for the student and the small business that may not be able to afford to pay an intern. He has worked for a small business and remembers when they could not afford an intern. They are now in a position to hire an intern, and it has made a world of difference for the company and the student.

5. Advisors

- a. **Advisor Lightner** thanked Advisor Cavanaugh for the information that he will be discussing today around FAFSA and financial IU transparency. He also commented on the discussion around unpaid internships, and he suggested that the commission look at innovation and entrepreneurship across Colorado IHEs. He mentioned that these could lead to more workforce participation from students.



Finally, Advisor Lightner encouraged other commissioners to listen to a report on Colorado public radio that talked about the significant work Adams State is doing with incarcerated students. This is very impactful work that many other Colorado IHEs are engaging in.

D. Executive Director Report

Executive Director Paccione weighed in on the conversation around unpaid internships. She mentioned that there is not enough discussion around internships. She said that we want to be very clear about what kinds of work force experiences our students get, whether it be apprenticeships or internships. She said that there are many opportunities for work force experience at our technical schools, community colleges, and 4-year institutions. We want to make sure that all paths are valued and valuable. Executive Director Paccione went on to share that the Lumina Report that was recently released showed that Colorado now has the highest educational attainment level in the nation at nearly 63%. We have a goal of 66% by 2025, and we are well on the way to meeting that goal. Dr. Paccione mentioned that although accessibility, attainment, and affordability are not the main focus for the strategic plan, these things are still important. She also mentioned that there is still a tremendous equity gaps, and the department will be focusing on how to close these gaps over the next three years.

Executive Director Paccione also shared that the department continues to collaborate with other state agency partners around the Longitudinal data and are looking to make progress on this initiative.

Dr. Paccione reported that the 2023 free application days saved students nearly \$3 million in college application fees and those students submitted almost 65,000 college and university admission applications over 3 days.

Executive Director Paccione went on to share that there was a recent celebration for the first 300 graduates who received an associate degree from our CORE program, Colorado Re-Engaged Initiative. This initiative allows 4-year institutions to offer an associate degree to students that have stopped or dropped out. It was a nice celebration and many of the staff from the department attended. For many this degree will allow for new opportunities in the workforce and increased earning potential.

Dr. Paccione boasted that we have a small but mighty outreach team, and they are reaching all corners of Colorado. They hosted a very successful financial aid educator training the Trinidad State College in January. They are already preparing for the next training in the Denver metro area on February 9. This team will also host FAFSA/CASFA block parties in Denver and Pueblo in the coming month.

The Open Education Resources received many grant proposals and the OER board selected 26 for the \$1 million in funding. There was an emphasis on zero textbook cost degrees this year, and half of the recipients are from those proposals. She expects this to be presented to the Commission at the March meeting for approval.

Executive Director Paccione mentioned that she and other staff members attended the Career Fair at the School of Mines. She was impressed with the number of industry partners and students that participated and was able to learn a bit about what the recruiters are looking for in the short 7-10 minutes to decide if the student is of interest to



them. She also noted that the CIA received a lot of interest at this event and had one of the longest lines.

Finally, Executive Director Paccione mentioned the Commissioners' request to get more regular updates on programs that the department is responsible for. She proposed to the Chair and Vice Chair to add a standing agenda item for this meeting to showcase/update these programs so the commissioners have a better understanding.

Before closing, Dr. Paccione gave a warm send-off and thank you to Advisor, Dr. Colleen O'Neil. She is leaving CDE and the Commission. Everyone wished her well!

E. Public Comment – No public comment

II. Discussion Items

- A. Legislative Update-** Legislative Liaison, Carla Blanc talked briefly about some of the legislative items. First, she mentioned a bill that would provide funding for students who experienced homelessness while in high school in Colorado. Similar to the FosterEd program that was created in 2022 by Senator Zenzinger, this program would cover the full cost of attendance. Next, Carla talked about a technical change to regional accreditation language in statute. This very technical bill would essentially remove statutory references to regional accreditation in statute. Carla moved on to discuss the work for an extension for spending authority on HB22-1349. This spending authority is set to expire in June 2024, and the hope is to have it extended to 2026 so that tasks related to this work can be completed. Finally, Carla mentioned what is probably the biggest of the legislative items, an update to the Student Bill of Rights. This has not been updated since 2001, and there are 3 specific updates that the department would like to see:
1. A right to transparency on the cost of attendance;
 2. Seeking language around transparency with transfer credits; and
 3. Create an expectation around the right to expect reasonable return on investment for your degree

There are 4 bills on the legislative agenda and all are still in draft mode. Commissioner Walmer asked about the Student Bill of Rights draft and if the transfer sub-committee will have an opportunity to review the draft. Carla responded that she is working with a new drafter at the Capitol, but it is moving along and they are hoping to introduce that draft late next week or early the week after that. The group went on with a discussion on protocol for draft legislation and when it is appropriate to have stakeholder meetings regarding the bill and share information about the draft.

Commissioner Walmer also asked Carla if she could share any information about the first generation serving higher education institutions bill. Carla responded that this bill is very similar to a bill that was introduced last year. It would create a designation for certain higher education institutions if 45% or more of their population is first gen. There are a few differences, but they are largely the same.

- B. Federal Activity and Its Effects on Higher Education -** Advisor Mark Cavanaugh presented information regarding Financial Value Transparency and other federal regulations that are on the way. He mentioned changes with FAFSA, the Pell Grant, and Federal Work Study (FWS) and how these changes could affect students and families negatively. He also shared information with the group about the FAFSA rollout combined with federal budget and how that is creating student aid uncertainty –See presentation.



III. Consent Items

- A. Approval of Policy Revision on Student Eligibility for Student Educator Stipends and Educator Test Stipends – *Sam Fogleman, Interim Director of Educator Preparation Pathways*
- B. Re-approval of the Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness Definition – *Carl Einhaus, Senior Director of Student Success and P-20 Alignment*
- C. Approval of Two-Year Cash-Funded Capital List for Colorado State University – *Kennedy Evans, Lead Finance Analyst*

Commissioner Harber moved to approve the consent items. Seconded by Commissioner Walmer. The motion was approved.

IV. Action Items – No Action Items

The meeting was adjourned at 2:30pm.

