



COLORADO

Colorado Commission on
Higher Education

Department of Higher Education

Sarah Kendall Hughes, Chair
Jennifer Walmer, Vice Chair
Paul Berrick Abramson
Lisandra Gonzales
Aaron Harber
Teresa Kostenbauer
Steven Meyer
Ana Temu Otting
Eric Tucker
Jim Wilson

Minutes of the Colorado Commission on Higher Education (CCHE) Meeting Virtual April 5, 2024

BUSINESS MEETING

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

I. Opening Business

A. Attendance

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

Advisors attending: Mark Cavanaugh, Dr. Michael Lightner, Mark Superka, Danielle Ongart, Jamie Viefhaus-Zak, Leilani Domingo, Dr. Melinda Piket-May

B. Approval of the Minutes for the March 1, 2024 Commission Meeting

Commissioner Harber moved to approve the March 1st minutes. Seconded by Commissioner Gonzales. The motion was approved.

C. Reports

1. Chair - Chair Hughes acknowledged the informative presentation from Jason Gauden and The Common Sense Institute titled "Supply and Demand: Diagnosing Colorado's Skills and Attainment Gap." There is a high level of alignment with the work of the Commission and the groundwork that Commissioner Gonzales does with her organization. Chair Hughes went on to share some fond memories, high accolades and gratitude for departing President Tom Stritikus (Fort Lewis) and President Carrie Besnette Hauser (Colorado Mountain College). Chair Hughes thanked everyone that was involved for their collaboration and partnership on the Student Bill of Rights bill and the focus of transfer. She challenged everyone to engage in the conversation around this bill during the legislative update and to highlight how the bill is better and makes for better outcomes for students. She is also looking forward to a rich conversation around the tax credits that are being discussed and how they relate to the transfer work the Commission is focused on.

Chair Hughes mentioned that she would like the next CCHE Work Session to focus on Strata Foundation's new opportunity index. She encouraged the commissioners to review the report prior to the next meeting. Chair Hughes reminded everyone that Commissioners will vote later in the meeting for an Interim Vice Chair. She also mentioned that the Commission will begin taking nominations today for the Chair and Vice Chair positions. Finally, Chair Hughes informed everyone that the CCHE Retreat for 2024 will take place July 24-26 on the Western Colorado University campus.



2. Vice Chair – No Vice Chair report given the position is vacant this month.
3. Commission Standing Committees
 - a. Student Success & Workforce Alignment – Commissioner Abramson reported that this Committee had a short meeting where they discussed how they can lean in on the recommendations for the 1215 Task Force and how this aligns with the Commission’s strategic plan and priorities. This Committee plans to use the CCHE Retreat to identify some things that they want to focus on in the year ahead.
 - b. Finance, Performance & Accountability - Commissioner Tucker reported that this Committee met recently and discussed some of the feedback they received on the various rubrics for capital and IT. They are careful to continue to be in alignment with other agencies so things are consistent for the institutions and duplicate work can be avoided. This Committee also spent some time reviewing the SHEEO report that was proven useful for practices on developing or redeveloping funding formulas.
 - c. HB22-1349 Technical Workgroup Update – Michael Vente reported for this group. He mentioned that they met this past week and had an opportunity to dive a little deeper into the data and what are the components of the minimum threshold equation. Michael shared that this committee also had a presentation from Dr. Allie Bell who talked about the longitudinal data landscape and facilitated an understanding of those best practices.
 - d. Transfer Ad Hoc Subcommittee- Commissioner Abramson – This Committee is on hiatus until after the legislative session.
4. Commissioners.
 - a. **Commissioner Gonzales** shared that she works with civic influencers ages 16-24 who received mentoring and training and compensation to work alongside decision makers and be a voice in the work that impacts them the most. She is exceptionally proud of 3 of those young people who were able to testify in favor of Senate Bill 24-164 that supports transparency requirements. Commissioner Gonzales also reported that she attended a convening in Dallas of thirteen other leading communities in educational improvements and outcomes through the Strive Together Network.
 - b. **Commissioner Kostenbauer** shared that she had an opportunity to visit the University of Colorado – Colorado Springs and the pre-collegiate program. This program starts at 7th grade and welcomes anyone that is first gen military connected or low-income from any district in that area including Pueblo. The program focuses on informed choice and belonging and all wraparound services including parent discussions. She also had an opportunity to join Executive Director Paccione and Commissioner Tucker on a visit to Pikes Peak State College. Highlights from that visit includes their Promise Program and the new medical campus they opened in 2023. Commissioner Kostenbauer mentioned that there was some interesting discussion around accreditation and how in the medical area Oklahoma did away with accreditation. She said they also talked specifically about surgical techs and certificates versus degrees and what the difference in the education might do to data like infection rates. Commissioner Kostenbauer ended



by saying that Colorado is pretty solid, but it is good to be aware of the discussions and changes that are happening.

- c. **Commissioner Tucker** agreed with Commissioner Kostenbauer regarding the visit to Pikes Peak State College. It was a great tour, and they certainly have a focus on equity and may be a model for some of the things we can do from a Commissioner standpoint. Commissioner Tucker also mentioned that they want the Commission to recognize that they do heavily invest in COSI and want to encourage other institutions and organizations to do the same.

5. Advisors

- a. **Advisor Cavanaugh** updated the Commission on the FAFSA situation. He did mention that the FAFSA completion is down about 30% nationally from where it usually is, which means we could be missing a lot of students. This could translate to a large percentage drop in enrollment nationally that some institutions may not survive. Advisor Cavanaugh acknowledges that Colorado may be in a better position because of the emphasis the Department has put on FAFSA completion and the CASFA program. He also spoke briefly about the delay from the US Department of Education for financial transparency reporting. Finally, he shared his concern for losing the staff that are working closely with the FAFSA situation as this will be the same population responsible for the financial transparency reporting and this brings a lot of pressure.
- b. **Advisor Lightner** shared that he working in collaboration with the Heather Delange and the Department of Higher Education as well as colleagues in other Institutions of Higher Education on addressing issues with the state authorization reciprocity agreements.

D. Executive Director Report

Executive Director Paccione began with advising the Commission that the department is in a very deliberate process to determine our fiscal year 2025 legislative agenda. She invited the commissioners to send any ideas they have to contribute via email to Dr. Sophia Laderman by Thursday, May 2nd. Dr. Paccione briefly spoke about the early childhood stipends and scholarships that have gone out. Nearly \$3 million in scholarships and \$3.8 million in stipends that cover ECE 101 and 103. There are still issues around affordability and attainment, but this helps the students tremendously. With these 2 classes students can begin to work in early childhood. Executive Director Paccione also mentioned CO Helps, a collegiate apprenticeship program. The US Department of Labor gave us \$12 million to produce 5,000 apprenticeships in the healthcare industry by June 30, 2024. Dr. Paccione informed the Commission that there will be another FAFSA event on April 8th with the Daniels Fund. She also informed that our state is down 27% for FAFSA completion and, as Advisor Cavanaugh mentioned, 30% nationally. She publicly recognized Colorado Mesa University for really finding creative ways to support their students through the FAFSA issues. Dr. Paccione also commented that the visit to Pikes Peak State College was fantastic! She commended President Lance Bolton for being innovative and doing a wonderful job acquiring funds for great initiatives on Campus. Finally, Dr. Paccione announced that Dr. Kim Poast will be retiring from the department in June. Dr. Poast has been committed to education in Colorado for at least 25 years! The department will surely miss her, but we are also excited for what comes next for her.



E. Public Comment – No public comment

II. Discussion Items

- A. **Legislative Update-** Carla Blanc provided a brief update current bills working their way through the legislative process, including Senate Bill 24-164, Student Bill of Rights bill, which is a Department of Higher Education bill. The group had a robust conversation about this bill and the updates to it and how it affects the students. She also shared that the Senate just got through the long bill, and that is going back to the JBC members to continue considering amendments that were made by their members.
- B. **Vote for Interim Vice Chair** – Chair Hughes explained that we need to vote on a new Vice Chair because Vice Chair Scott moved out of Colorado and had step down from the Commission. There was only one nomination for the Interim Vice Chair position and that was for Commissioner Walmer. Commissioner Harber motioned to elect Commissioner Walmer as the interim Vice Chair. Commissioner Gonzales second the motion, and it was approved by the Commission with no objections. Chair Hughes also reminded Commissioners to send their nominations for Chair and Vice Chair to Renee before Monday, April 29th.

III. Consent Items (None)

IV. Action Items –

- A. Degree Authorization – Approval of the Renewal for Reach University’s Field Experience Authorization – *Heather DeLange, Director of Office of Private Postsecondary Education*

Dr. Chris Rasmussen explained the field experience authorization for Reach University and the requirement for an annual renewal of authorization to continue compliance with Colorado law. Commissioner Harber moved to approve action agenda item IV. A. Seconded by Commissioner Abramson. The motion was approved.

- B. Degree Authorization – Approval of Renewal for Liberty University’s Field Experience - *Heather DeLange, Director of Office of Private Postsecondary Education*

Dr. Chris Rasmussen explained the field experience authorization for Liberty University and the requirement for an annual renewal of authorization to continue compliance with Colorado law. Commissioner Harber moved to approve action agenda item IV. B. Seconded by Commissioner Abramson. The motion was approved.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:33 pm.

