

BOARD OF GOVERNORS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

Minutes of the Meeting
April 16, 2008

Department of Higher Education
Hartford, CT

Members Present: W. Aniskovich, D. Brennan, J. Gatling, J. Reynolds, F. Ridley, R. Robins, A. Vertefeuille, M. Villani

Members Absent: B. Flaherty, H. Penner

Members of the Public: J. Barber, SCSU; G. Bermúdez, CSUS; P. Best, UConn; S. Buckley, Gateway; S. Braverman, CCSU; D. Cassidy, COSC; P. Cocchiola, BOT-CTC; J. Donohue, Albertus Magnus; R. Free, ECSU; C. Gorlin, NCC; P. Hirschy, ACC; P. Kedderis, CSUS; A. Levin Becker, Hartford Courant; D. Mobley, CCC; A. Ortiz, Central High School (Bridgeport); G. Ragosta, CCIC; B. Richards, HCC; J. Sherrard, TRCC; R. Stewart, CSUS; S. Tran-Creque, NCC

1. Call to Order

F. Ridley called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m.

2. Approval of the Board Minutes

J. Reynolds moved and J. Gatling seconded the motion to approve the minutes of the March 19, 2008. The motion passed unanimously.

3. Public Participation

None.

4. Report of the Board Chairman

Chairman Ridley informed the Board that he attended the annual Connecticut Commission on Community Service Awards Dinner which honors students and campus administrators from across the state, and commended staff for organizing a well-received event.

He noted the appointment of new Board member by the Senate President Pro Tempore to replace Ross H. Hollander. The appointee is awaiting legislative confirmation.

Chairman Ridley explained that he is resuming the scheduling of campus meetings with administrators and students and welcomed other Board members to join him and the Commissioner. Upcoming meetings are scheduled at Asnuntuck Community College and Southern Connecticut State University.

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He concluded by commenting on the Board's meeting format which is being modified to address Board interest in spending more time exploring policy issues. As a result, more routine matters will be placed on the Commissioner's Consent Calendar to allow time for policy discussions. Ridley stressed, however, that if on upcoming agendas, Board members had questions about matters on the Consent Calendar or would like items moved from the Consent Calendar, they should contact the Commissioner or staff prior to the meeting so that, if needed, the agenda can be amended and institutional representation arranged.

5. Report of the Commissioner

Commissioner Meotti updated the Board on the student lending market, indicating that staff have been monitoring the issue and have been in contact with the U.S. Department of Education. Two entities in Connecticut provide student loans: the Connecticut Student Loan Foundation (CSLF), and the Connecticut Higher Education Supplemental Loan Authority (CHESLA). CSLF has been affected by the bond market but CHESLA has not. He will keep the Board apprised of developments.

M. Meotti stated that he has met with various members of the higher education community, including the chief executive officers of the constituent units, and will continue to meet with legislative, higher education, business and community leaders as he settles into his commissioner's role.

He informed the Board that the Alternate Route to Certification is moving its programs from Middlesex Community College to the lower floors of 61 Woodland Street in Hartford, the same building that houses the Department of Higher Education. The move will strengthen staff coordination and save on rental expenses.

6. Commissioner's Consent Calendar

- a. University of Connecticut, Tri-Campus – accreditation of a program in American Studies, leading to the Bachelor of Arts degree
- b. University of Connecticut – accreditation of a Master of Science degree program in Clinical and Translational Research
- c. University of Connecticut – licensure of a program in Nursing Practice, leading to the Doctor of Nursing Practice degree
- d. University of Connecticut – accreditation of a program in Physical Therapy, leading to the Doctor of Physical Therapy degree
- e. Goodwin College – licensure of a program in General Studies, leading to an Associate of Science degree

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- f. University of Hartford – accreditation of a concentration in Montessori Primary Education within the M.Ed. in Early Childhood Education program
- g. Norwalk Community College – licensure of a program in Physical Therapist Assistant, leading to the Associate of Science
- h. Post University – accreditation of a program in a Human Services, leading to the Master of Science degree, to be offered on-line and on-campus
- i. Approval of State Funds for an Endowed Chair in Biology at Eastern Connecticut State University

On a motion made by J. Gatling, seconded by J. Reynolds, the Board unanimously voted to approve the Commissioner's Consent Calendar.

7. Finance and Administration

Discussion Item

Minority Participation in Connecticut Higher Education: Arthur Poole and Harold "Dean" Davis.

Commissioner Meotti stated that the agency is examining new approaches and strategies to increasing minority student success in higher education. Chairman Ridley added that this discussion would serve as a brainstorming session on how to increase minority student success in higher education -- a broader topic than minority student enrollment or graduation. He summarized the guidelines for holding a brainstorming session, stressing the goal of capturing ideas, questions and thoughts about the issue without delving into analysis or debate. Following this discussion, Department staff will distill the points raised and organize them into themes for further deliberation and strategic planning.

M. Meotti introduced Arthur Poole, Director of Educational Opportunity, who reviewed the public system's progress under the Board's *Strategic Plan to Ensure Racial and Ethnic Diversity in Connecticut Public Higher Education*. He noted that Connecticut public institutions of higher education annually reach new records in minority enrollment. In 2007, minority group members were 25.8% of all undergraduates, slightly larger than their 24.2% composition of the state's general population. While there is a lag between minority enrollment and graduation, the gap is closing. Minorities remain over-represented, however, at the community colleges.

A. Poole described the Board's Minority Advancement Plan which consists of ConnCAS (the Connecticut College Access and Success Program), ConnCAP (the Connecticut Collegiate Awareness and Preparation Program, and the Connecticut State GEAR UP (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs). A. Poole introduced H. "Dean" Davis, Program Manager for the Connecticut State GEAR UP Project. H. Davis described the

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Connecticut State GEAR UP Project which is funded by the U.S. Department of Education and designed to motivate and prepare minority students to attend and succeed in college. The GEAR UP Project serves 7th – 12th grade low-income students from New Haven and Bridgeport by conducting after-school programs, PSAT testing, parent/student workshops, summer and Saturday prep programs. It also makes scholarships available.

A. Poole underscored the importance of family involvement, and noted a survey documenting the frequent over-estimations of college costs by low-income families.

A. Poole introduced Alejandro Ortiz, Principal of Central High School in Bridgeport which participates in GEAR UP. Part of Central's mission statement is to "graduate all students college ready," and the school has re-organized into four small learning communities to serve students better. He stated that Central's 9th graders are in cluster teams, with four teachers, focusing on math, science, social studies and English. Central offers an after-school program for 9th and 10th graders, a credit recovery program and an e-curriculum developed by teachers. GEAR UP has provided much-needed programming and funding.

A. Poole introduced James Barber, Director of Student Support Services at Southern Connecticut State University (SCSU). J. Barber stated that the Department of Higher Education has been a tremendous resource to minority recruitment efforts. Years ago, SCSU was viewed as unwelcoming to minority students until campus leaders took action. In 1972, SCSU began a summer program for resident students which was later expanded to include commuter students with funds from the Department of Higher Education. Additional funding from other sources enabled Southern to create a mentoring program for younger, "at-risk" youths, enabling them to experience classes and college expectations.

A. Poole introduced John Donohue, Vice President of Academic Affairs at Albertus Magnus College. J. Donohue attributed the College's success in attracting and enrolling minority students to three factors: accessibility, flexibility, and follow-through. Although Albertus benefits from a diverse surrounding community, funding continues to limit accessibility, especially for Latino students, many of whom are illegal aliens who aren't eligible for grants or scholarships. J. Donahue stated there needs to be a better understanding of the implications of immigration status for children of illegal aliens if the child is born in the U.S. or came to the U.S. as a child. Albertus strives to offer as much flexible programming as possible, with alternative and evening programs for both part- and full-time students. With regard to follow-through, Albertus works with students individually to keep them on track and schedule. There are an adequate number of personnel to work with students and help them realize their potential.

A. Poole introduced students participating in the dialogue: Salestria Buckley, Gateway Community College; Djenne (DJ) Mobley, Capital Community College; and Steven Tran-Creque, Norwalk Community College.

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The Board commenced a lengthy discussion on minority student success. R. Robins described the social process needed to familiarize those new to higher education with possibilities afforded by a college education, and pointed to “buddy systems” created by some colleges to mentor first-generation college students. He mentioned the probable differences in male and female readiness to consider college as well as among various cultures.

A. Poole stated there is unfortunately a large gender difference in attitudes about college among Hispanics and African Americans, making outreach to males particularly problematic.

W. Aniskovich asked if data had been collected on the gap between enrollment and graduation for non-minorities and if so, does it shed light on appropriate goals for minority students. He indicated he understood that the gap between minority student enrollment and graduation was narrowing but questioned whether this was due to minorities enrolling early on in smaller numbers and who may have been more motivated, or to particular circumstances in 1997 that were more conducive to minority student success. He asked, what was the goal for closing the gap in minority student enrollment and graduation; is the ideal to get the gap to zero?

J. Barber responded that he was 99% certain that Southern’s data shows that as minority student numbers increase, so does the gap between their enrollment and graduation.

W. Aniskovich asked whether policymakers should care about the gap or whether there is some other, more appropriate measure to use in evaluating success. J. Barber noted that if we are satisfied by what we are doing, we are already in trouble. No matter our degree of success, he would not be happy even if Southern had an 88% graduation rate for minority students.

W. Aniskovich asked about college expectations of high school preparation. J. Donohue indicated in reviewing high school student transcripts; he looks for students who are “diamonds in the rough” – a metric difficult to define by standardized indicators. Careful digging is required to identify patterns of strong and weak performance. If a student crashes and burns in his or her sophomore year, the focus should be expanded beyond their grades to any contributing factors that may be masking the student’s potential.

W. Aniskovich inquired about environmental “markers” that make minority students thrive and succeed in school; are students better able to succeed in high schools which meet goals for racial and ethnic diversity and where test scores and attendance are high? J. Barber replied by describing three factors he thinks are important. 1) parental and student involvement; 2) the level of commitment that teachers/professionals make to advancing students to the next level; and 3) honesty in education. He asked, “We test kids to death, but do parents understand what these test scores mean?”

J. Barber continued that before placement exams, Southern used standardized tests for placing students into its 6-week summer program. Halfway into the program, he would share with the students comparisons of their performance on standardized tests against mid-point evaluations. Many students were surprised that their test results showed they had mastered only 10th grade

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math or 9th grade reading since they had graduated from high school as honor students. He quoted a student's remarks, "If I knew my A was not a 12th grade A, I would have worked harder, what else was there for me to do?" J. Barber called for honesty in testing, and for ways to relay honest test performance to students and parents for better understanding and greater parental involvement.

D. Brennan underscored the need for more attention placed on honesty in education for all students.

M. Villani noted the Board's role in approving teacher education programs, and the need to educate potential teachers to better teach minority students and, in so doing improve minority student retention.

J. Reynolds commented on the need for earlier intervention with at-risk students. She stated that although middle and high school remedial programs may be effective, the existence of these programs indicates we are not reaching all children early enough. She pointed to the success of Head Start programs which intervene very early to get kids on the "right track," and suggested earlier parental involvement as a means of creating greater education-oriented cultures at home.

M. Meotti said the issue of minority success needs a champion. He has found that public policy changes happen because an individual champions an issue, i.e. promotes it, throws attention to it and finds solutions. Since this issue has so many regional players -- colleges, high schools, corporate and philanthropic foundations, and community programs -- one idea may be to identify a regional champion for each of the greater metropolitan areas of the state such as New Haven, Bridgeport and Hartford. These individuals would advance this cause, and enlist partners in identifying needs, gaps and an action strategy to maximize our current investments and supplement activities on a scale needed to be truly successful.

F. Ridley posed several questions that should be answered at some point. Does "minority" automatically equal "low-income?" What is the impact of the State Board of Education's default curriculum on our efforts? He noted that he likes the 3-pronged strategy of access, flexibility and follow-through but wonders how to apply this approach system-wide. He pointed to how immigration status is causing uneven student performance by Latinos and Hispanics and whether in examining this issue, further breakdown by ethnic background is needed. For instance, is the situation for a Puerto Rican person the same for as a person from Guatemala?

J. Gatling noted that despite growth in the numbers of Hispanics and African Americans and their larger role in our workforce, urban schools employ very few Hispanic and African American teachers. We should recruit more minorities into teaching. Commenting on affordability, J. Gatling stated he believes that every parent wants their children to do better than themselves and to go on to college; if minority or low-income families felt that their kids had a chance of going to college, he thinks they would play more of a role in the child's education. He pointed to the Kalamazoo project as a potential model.

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J. Sherrard stated that enrollment by women and minority students at Norwalk Community College's nuclear engineering program reaches 20 percent each year due to three key practices. First and most important, the College employs the program's current students and graduates to talk to elementary, middle and high school students about careers in nuclear engineering. Second, all students are required to have a paid summer internship in the industry, and third, all open houses held at the college are staffed by the program's students.

D. Mobley noted that at Capital Community College, he volunteers to talk to high school students entering the ConnCAP program where he sees, first-hand, their desire to succeed and transfer to four-year colleges. He also stated that he understands the need for more African-American and Latino teachers, and this has encouraged him to enter teaching. He indicated the need for leadership programs for younger students.

Referring to the preceding two speakers, J. Reynolds suggested creating similar cultures, at the high school level, where it is considered cool to be smart and to want to succeed.

S. Buckley suggested making more financial assistance and resources, such as child care, available for students interested in attending more costly colleges like Yale and Wesleyan

S. Tran-Creque called attention to Yale's Eli Whitney Program and stated that he believes Wesleyan has a similar program. He described his experience at a very affluent and mostly white high school where he was neither. Nor did he have much parental support or an understanding of how to apply to college. He is currently a transfer student which he managed with some difficulty as he did not get much assistance from the college. He concluded that affluent high schools such as his expect that students will be able to plan for their continued studies on their own or with their parents' assistance; such schools do not help students navigate the process.

F. Ridley suggested that Mr. Tran-Creque share his transfer experience with Dr. Zdanys as many transfer agreements are now in place, making the process less difficult and more seamless.

D. Brennan proposed creating a program to help students apply to college, focusing on encouraging more minority students to seek admission to four-year colleges. She suggested changing the current five-year grant cycle of the ConnCAS and ConnCAP programs to an annual cycle to generate more creativity and alternative programming. She also asked if there are differences between children of immigrants who were born in this country versus children of immigrants who came to this country as a one- or two-year olds. She noted that the gender gap issue exists across racial categories and that young males are not going to school at the rates we need them to be.

J. Zdanys mentioned a Harvard study of high school students in California who defined themselves as either smart or social depending on whether or not were accepted by their school's culture. Those with grades of B- or lower were more likely to be accepted by the African American community. Those with grades of C+ or lower were more likely to be accepted by the

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Hispanic community. These perceptions were almost opposite those of non-minority students, who reported the higher their grade average, the more accepted they were among their peers.

D. Davis proposed a public relations campaign focused on how to make “academics cool.” He reflected on his school experience, stating that he would intentionally arrive at school late so he would have something bad on his record and thus be considered cool. J. Reynolds supported this suggestion.

J. Barber referred to a comment made earlier by J. Gatling calling for more minority teachers, and stated this should be a priority in hiring college faculty as well. He stated students are most likely to succeed in environments where they have mentors who reflect their culture. This point was made clear to Southern by leaders of the Hispanic community. Increasing diversity among college faculty was a priority 5 -8 years ago but since then, attention to this issue has waned. W. Aniskovich proposed that in addition to focusing on racial diversity, college hiring address gender representation as well.

M. Villani stated that minority students may be over-represented at two-year institutions because these colleges appear less intimidating to them. She proposed examining the effectiveness of transfer agreements and counseling, and encouraging four-year colleges to recruit more minority transfer students. Students who succeed at two-year colleges are likely to be more confident in continuing their studies at a four-year college.

F. Ridley closed the meeting and asked for any additional comments to be given to staff within the next ten days.

Action Item

- a. 2008 Annual Report: Strategic Plan to Ensure Racial and Ethnic Diversity in Connecticut Higher Education

On a motion made by A. Vertefeuille, seconded by R. Robins, the Board unanimously voted to direct the Department of Higher Education to request that the Governor and state legislature double the state’s allocation for the Minority Advancement Program for the 2009-11 biennium. (Since earlier attempts to achieve this goal have been unsuccessful, it is further recommended that proposals regarding the expansion of MAP be aligned with state initiatives to effect economic development, workforce development and/or school reform.)

The Board of Governors further directs the Department of Higher Education to begin a restructuring and/or expansion of the ConnCAP and ConnCAS programs to increase the number of targeted students prepared to enter and succeed in acquiring an undergraduate degree and approve the 2008 Annual Report on the Board’s *Strategic Plan to Ensure Racial and Ethnic Diversity in Connecticut Public Higher Education* for submission to the Governor, the Connecticut General Assembly and interested parties.

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8. Joint Meeting with the Standing Advisory Committee

F. Ridley welcomed the members of the Standing Advisory Committee (SAC) asked for introductions. J. Sherrard, SAC Chair, provided a history of the SAC noting that the committee is comprised of trustees, administration, faculty and students from each of the constituent units. He described SAC's monthly meetings and its joint meetings with the Board in spring and fall. Historically, SAC members have suggested the topics of the joint meetings.

J. Sherrard indicated that SAC members would like Commissioner Meotti to elaborate on his goals and priorities and his view of SAC's role. M. Meotti responded that he does not have a specific list or philosophy at this time, but that various issues stand out such as broadening student access and success, teacher preparation and transfer and articulation.

There was a discussion regarding the role of the SAC executive committee as permitted by state statute. The Connecticut General Statute Section 10a-4 allows for the creation of a 7-member executive committee which can participate in Board meetings but not vote. SAC members indicated that they feel under utilized and urged the Board to use them as the frontline to the higher education community. Board members welcomed this approach as well as the participation of an executive committee of the SAC at their monthly meetings.

Additional discussion followed regarding the various topics before SAC and its task forces. SAC is working on articulation, faculty preparation, student preparation for college, and textbook costs. It was suggested that an online survey be created for input by the academic community on how SAC can best represent staff and student interests. Commissioner Meotti offered the Department's technical assistance in the online development of this survey.

Chairman Ridley and Commissioner Meotti thanked the SAC members for the helpful discussion.

9. Other Business

None.

10. Adjournment

J. Reynolds moved and R. Robins seconded the motion to adjourn at 12:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Constance Fraser
Secretary