



## State of Connecticut

### The Connecticut General Assembly

#### The Planning Commission for Higher Education

LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING, ROOM 1800

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#### Judith K. Resnick, Chairperson

#### Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, February 17, 2015

4:00 p.m. Room 1C

The meeting was called to order at 4:03 p.m. by Judy Resnick.

The following commission members/designees/guests were present: Vagos Hadjimichael, Booker DeVaughn, David Walsh, Jason Jakubowski, Mary Lou Aleskie, James Maroney, Lois Schneider, John Bennett, Judith Resnick, John Shemo, Judith Goldfarb, Christopher Bruhl, Liz Caswell, Estela Lopez, Sally Reis, Judith Greiman, Roberta Willis, Danté Bartolomeo, and Whit Betts.

Judy Resnick introduced the newest member of the Planning Commission, Estela Lopez.

The members introduced themselves.

Judy Resnick indicated that the minutes from the last meeting will not be voted on at this meeting. She asked to defer acting on the minutes until they are edited. They will be voted on at the next meeting.

Judy Resnick turned the meeting over to Dennis Jones and Aims McGuinness from The National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS).

Aims McGuinness started NCHEMS' presentation.

John Bennett shared his concerns about the word "production" in the first bullet on page 8. He went on to say that the word "production" reminds him of an assembly line with a fixed set of things that are going to be done to students that will have them graduate with the same sort of things added to them.

Aims McGuinness indicated that NCHEMS' thought was that the best way to express it was actually like x number of students being graduated, so they will replace the language.

Judy Resnick discussed the first bullet on that page.

John Bennett mentioned that in figure 6 he doesn't think they meant to highlight Nevada, he thought they meant to highlight the nation, but if they did mean to highlight Nevada that's fine. He then went on to discuss the quality issues.

Aims McGuinness shared that the section John Bennett discussed was put together by the American Association of Colleges and Universities which talks about learning outcomes. He continued NECHEMS' presentation.

Roberta Willis asked if in bullet number 2 on page 10, the wording could be cleaned up to remove the multiple use of the word "and."

Aims McGuinness acknowledge that they struggled with that sentence.

John Bennett continued his comments regarding page 12.

Aims McGuinness offered that at the next meeting they put together an accountability report.

John Bennett stated that he thinks it's better when you ask students or institutions to determine what the assessment is, what they are assessing etc.

Aims McGuinness stated that also allows some mission differentiation.

John Bennett went on to discuss items on pages 19 through 21.

Jason Jakubowski asked that in terms of quality, isn't it governed almost universally for all of our institutions by NEASC (New England Association of Schools and Colleges) and other accrediting bodies?

John Bennett stated that he was not suggesting that quality is not an issue for any institution, but simply saying that if we are going to reward or going to monitor or going to encourage more graduates, we should also reward or acknowledge the quality of the education and the monitoring thereof.

Jason Jakubowski went on to discuss NEASC's accrediting procedures.

Roberta Willis commented that the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee had an informational hearing earlier in the day on outcomes based funding and the issue of quality came up. One of the presenters shared that quality is not quantifiable and therefore it's not a measurement tool for an outcomes based component or RBA process.

Estela Lopez remarked that she thinks everyone is in favor of quality, but that quality has a certain connotation that can be easily misinterpreted.

Aims McGuinness commented that Estela was involved earlier with assessments with student learning back in the 1980s. He went on to discuss the outcomes of that time period and the current discussion of quality.

Judy Resnick indicated that she thinks the Commission is doing a dance in this document setting the framework for the institutions to make decisions that are aligned with the Planning Commission's goals and the targets and that the Commission risks being too prescriptive by getting too focused on this

document. She went on to discuss helping the institutions come to an understanding about these measures. Judy reminded the Commission members that their focus is not at the institutional level.

John Bennett continued Jason's accreditation discussion and measurements of quality.

Dennis Jones asked if it would be acceptable to John if some of the language he discussed went under the accountability part on page 23.

John Bennett replied that his concern started back with the 70% discussion and his issue is that it will not do the State of Connecticut any good if we dumb down the educational process to enable getting more graduates.

Vagos Hadjimichael commented on an email he sent out to the Commission members and asked what the legislature will act on with regard to the document being reviewed.

Roberta Willis commented that as she looks at the document, she respects NCHEMS' policy recommendations, but that it's really a jumping off point. She continued that other ways to achieve the goals may be found. Roberta said she can see a lot that the legislature can act on in the document.

Aims McGuinness commented that NCHEMS' suggestion from the beginning has been that the most impact will be made by being very clear about the goals and very clear about the environment in which institutions respond to those goals, a lot of it relates to finance policy. He went on to say that the strategies will come from UCONN and ConnSCU and the independent sector responding to the goals. Aims continued that the reality is that if you look at Connecticut state statutes now, there are at least 6 sets of goals, and they are not clear, there are indicators over indicators. He commented that there has been a great deal of discussion about how finance policy is roughly disconnected to all of this. Aims said that they wanted to have goals that were part of the frame work for bottom up solutions.

Dennis Jones added that the other piece is being clear about the interpretation of that goal as reflected in the accountability metrics. He said that the "hows" would be determined by the institutions and the "what" and the "whethers" are the purview of state level policy. He went on to say that the more state level policy gets into the "hows" the less likely you are to get into the "whats" because it substitutes political action for professional choice.

Aims McGuinness stated that if you make the goal clear and the Board of Regents understands what they have to contribute as that goal, the only way the Board of Regents can do that is by improving transfer.

Booker DeVaughn said that he thought it wasn't absolutely clear about the value we placed on transfer and articulation program and thinks there needs to be more system to system transfer agreements.

Aims McGuinness mentioned that their recommendation, at this point, is to still keep focused on the goal and not to get into the detail at this stage.

Liz Caswell stated that the Board of Regents absolutely agrees with that and that transfer and articulation is the Board of Regents' top priority.

Aims McGuinness said that the goals are something the Board of Regents can work on.

Sally Reis shared that UConn is very proud of their articulations agreements.

Booker DeVaughn indicated that he's familiar with some of those and that those need to be spread further. He went on to discuss internal and external evaluations, and page 11, certificates of value.

Dennis Jones commented that the main problem with regard to preparing students to earn a living wage and further education, and outcome based funding, is that when you create incentives for institutions to graduate more students, one of the things that is starting to pop up is very meaningless certificates. He continued that those certificates do not prepare students for a living wage job and they are not transportable to any other institution, so there has to be some quality control on what is a certificate of value, and that is NCHEMS' language for saying that.

Chris Bruhl discussed affordability and points made on page 12. He asked for confirmation that affordability is total cost to degree, not run rate by semester or year. He went on to discuss reducing the amount of average student loan to the national average by 2025 and that it was not a goal worth having as it is only a savings of \$20 - \$40 per month differential over the loan repayment period. Chris stated that it would be more significant to have a reduction in the total cost of education.

Dennis Jones said that is really in the form of a goal and asked for suggestions as to how to re-state it.

Chris Bruhl replied that an alternative goal might be increase the number of high school graduates who enroll in Connecticut institutions by 5%, we might have a goal – increase to 25% the number of students who graduate debt free.

Dennis Jones asked for reactions to Chris' comments.

Estela Lopez said that what we don't want to do is to state it as there is access only people who can afford college; it needs to be stated as access to higher education to all levels of income.

Chris Bruhl replied that he agrees with Estela.

Aims McGuinness commented about the dilemma at the last hour regarding changes and what can really get done at this stage.

Chris Bruhl indicated that the document doesn't need to be re-drafted and he would provide 2 or 3 phrases literally that are already in the document.

Aims McGuinness said that in other context what he tries to do is say to a state – really take the goals seriously and deal with the realities of the population that you need to turn around, and you realize there is no more money, you have to think of systemic ways of doing things differently, which is what is being conveyed in the report. He asked Chris to get together some suggestions to get the Planning Commission over this hump.

Dennis Jones commented that he agrees on the points about bringing things in from 2-3 other parts of the report that are germane, but that he's struggling with a limited set of metrics that can measure progress on this goal without causing more harm than good.

Sally Reiss shared that UConn is very proud of their average debt at graduation and would be concerned about more prescriptive language.

Aims McGuinness replied that they will still come back to the issue.

Lois Schneider said that one way to save money is to reduce the time to degree; she asked if that was in the report anywhere.

Dennis Jones replied that is what Chris was discussing – reducing cost to degree, not cost per year or cost per semester.

Chris Bruhl went back to Sally's point about indebtedness and that indebtedness with a UConn degree and your earning potential is very different from indebtedness with a community college degree, or not completing a degree and that earning potential. He continued that a metric is needed for debt to earning potential not just debt as an absolute measure is an important piece.

Lois Schneider pointed out a wording error on page 20. She commented that she thought the process to this document was incredible. She went on to say that the independent/private colleges are an important piece to this and going forward she asked, how do you get them to buy in and participate.

Aims McGuinness replied that the privates have been more engaged in the process in Connecticut than they were in other states.

Judy Greiman commented that in terms of this process, the independents deeply understand their role in this state and that they are engaged.

Dennis Jones discussed the outcomes based funding component, which specially states that it rewards both public and independent institutions for contributing and increasing the number of graduates.

Judy Goldfarb said that she was looking at the metrics for finance and accountability and the ideas in benchmarking and asked how we going to get to the 70%.

Aims McGuinness replied that if you took the 70% and look at the demographics of the state a lot of the issues are not only within higher ed, but across the whole system and ultimately what the state is going to have to realize is that these are very much P20 goals, and that you can't get there without early childhood and dealing with adult ed.

Judy Goldfarb commented that she thinks some of that gets to strategies but she doesn't know what is being looked at in terms of over the course of the next 5 years – what would be the incentive for colleges to increase by 5%, 15%, 17% - where does movement start to show.

Aims McGuinness replied that part of the difficulty in this process is that these are long range goals, and that some states have action plans for this plan or that plan and accountability for that, which goes back to the conversation about needing someone to lead the process.

Dennis Jones commented that Aims is correct that this is a goal and referred to and discussed information in Appendix B.

Judy Greiman discussed when years ago and there was a nursing shortage, that we as a state discussed the problem, so there are ways to do it and that we do need some type of structure that makes everyone sit a table and talk.

Aims McGuinness replied that it will be a big leap to get to that goal with the limited resources available and if the stake holders don't start talking they aren't going to get there. The state will not get there if each institution does their own thing without pulling together.

Mary Lou Aleskie observed that if you look in the original legislation there was discussion of eliminating post-secondary achievement gap and that what the members have adopted is a stretch at not really doing what the original legislation set out. She went on to say that we need to emotionally commit to change as a state, as a society – not only for the betterment of meeting goals, but for all of our children and our citizens.

Sally Reiss said that she is going to send some figures regarding Appendix B.

Dennis Jones brought the discussion back to the point made by Mary Lou – the states that have been successful in making progress had a Governor who supported it and discussed it at every opportunity

David Walsh commented that he was very impressed with Mary Lou's comment that an emotional commitment to higher education is needed, but it troubles him that in Connecticut that we precluded any statement urging that we increase the financial commitment to higher ed. He went on to say that he'd like to see a remark that a person who completes their higher education will pay more taxes and contribute more to better society.

James Maroney asked if under "earn and learn" if apprenticeships going to be expanded, in particular stackable credentials for students?

Dennis Jones replied that it doesn't have to be a formal apprenticeship program, as much as a program where a student can get a paid internship and at the same time earn academic credit for their work experience. He continued that the student will be able to take home a paycheck and get academic credit at the same time.

Aims McGuinness added that he's outlining possible legislation on that and that it's not regular work study, it is help for students to get a reasonable wage for an academically integrated program and to make it work you need employers engaged and support for faculty to be able to design the curriculum.

Dennis Jones commented that the program has to have academic integrity – faculty will have to put some time into this, which brings up the question of how to make it economically viable at the institutional level, which is done by giving students credit and students paying tuition.

James Maroney said that involving companies more would make it more economically viable.

Aim McGuinness indicated that he found that one of the barriers for getting students engaged in certain industries is that you have to deal with insurance issues and risks.

James Maroney said his other question was that with regard to competency based education, how can we do what the State of Washington is doing. He then asked if there would be created a means of establishing certificates of value.

Dennis Jones brought up regulatory structure for approval of those programs.

Judy Resnick shared that this was talked about in one of the goals that was previously discussed.

Dennis Jones went on to say that there is another piece of this and that is that part of the regulatory environment that has to go away, old policies that are in the way have to be removed. Dennis stated that is part of the next step of the process.

Judy Resnick asked for a vote of support for the current version of the Strategic Plan, understanding that there is some tweaking, so the vote will be for the current version of the Strategic Plan as amended.

John Bennett abstained from voting, the rest of the voting members present voted yes.

Aims McGuinness indicated that NCHEMS' intent was to move to the next phase, which is accountability, which will be discussed at a later meeting.

Dennis Jones commented that in addition to accountability, tasks for the next year include legislation.

Roberta Willis shared that there are several bills coming before the legislature this session, including bills on certificates, earn & learn, and language to clean up the original legislation for the Planning Commission that was done in 2007.

Mary Lou Aleskie asked that the Planning Commission be apprised of the status of those bills.

Dennis Jones stated that central to all of this is the fiscal policy going forward.

Judy Greiman said that 2 of the unfinished elements are the regulatory review and the financial aid review.

Dennis Jones responded that the regulatory review is part of what will be done over the next year. He continued that NCHEMS made a recommendation regarding the financial aid piece.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:44 p.m.