

APPROVED

DECEMBER 8, 2020

Item #G-4
December 8, 2020

**MINUTES – STRATEGIC PLAN BOARD MEETING
September 15, 2020**

Submitted for: Action.

Summary: Minutes of the September 15, 2020 Strategic Plan meeting of the Illinois Board of Higher Education held via telephone and video conference as permitted by Public Act 101-0640 enacted June 12, 2020, and the Illinois Governor Disaster Proclamation dated August 21, 2020.

Action Requested: That the Illinois Board of Higher Education approve the minutes of the September 15, 2020, Strategic Plan Board meeting.



STATE OF ILLINOIS
BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION

MINUTES – STRATEGIC PLAN BOARD MEETING
September 15, 2020

A meeting of the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) was called to order at 9 a.m. via telephone and video conference as permitted by Public Act 101-0640 enacted June 12, 2020, and the Illinois Governor’s Disaster Proclamation dated August 21, 2020.

The following Board members were present: John Atkinson, Chair, Jennifer Delaney, Derek Douglas, Andrea Evans, Teresa Garate, Jennifer Garrison, Veronica Gloria, Veronica Herrero, Alice Marie Jacobs, Pranav Kothari, Mackenzi Matthews, Kenneth Shaw, Clarence Wyatt, and Eric Zarnikow.

Others present: Mark S. Jamil, Burke, Burns & Pinelli, LTD.; Ms. Ginger Ostro, Illinois Board of Higher Education; Dr. Martin Abraham, Western Illinois University; Dr. Larry Dietz, Illinois State University; Dr. Lisa Freeman, Northern Illinois University; Dr. Gloria Gibson, Northeastern Illinois University; Dr. Cheryl Green, Governors State University; Dr. Brian Durham, Illinois Community College Board; Mr. Dominic Dorsey, Disability Advisory Committee; Dr. Stephanie Bernoteit, Illinois Board of Higher Education; Ms. Melissa Hahn, Illinois Board of Higher Education; Ms. Karen Helland, Illinois Board of Higher Education; Dr. Eric Lichtenberger, Illinois Board of Higher Education; Ms. Jaimee Ray, Illinois Board of Higher Education; Mr. Nyle Robinson, Illinois Board of Higher Education; Dr. Arthur Sutton, Illinois Board of Higher Education; and Ms. Tracy Rembusch, Illinois Board of Higher Education.

A. Call to Order/Roll Call

- **Call Meeting to Order, Chair John Atkinson**

Chair John Atkinson called the meeting to order. Interim Board Secretary Rembusch took roll call. A quorum was present.

- **Welcome and Remarks by Chair John Atkinson**

Chair Atkinson stated that today’s meeting is a working session of the Board to engage in substantive conversation on the Board’s statutory mandate to create a strategic plan for higher education in Illinois. He reported that the current plan, *The Illinois Public Agenda*, is now over 12 years old. He stated the Board sees the importance of developing a new strategic plan that will address critical issues facing higher education. IBHE has engaged UPD Consulting to support IBHE in this effort.

Chair Atkinson reported that our Board, public and private institutions, employers, policy makers and all stakeholders in the higher education ecosystem must step up to meet the daunting challenges that we face. He has spoken with policy makers, legislators, mayors, and K-12 leaders and is excited by the shared vision and the focus on our students. Chair Atkinson reported he is

very excited about launching this process and thanked Executive Director Ostro for her leadership and for getting us to this point.

B. Presentation and Discussion

Chair Atkinson introduced Stacy Jordan and Priya Shankar from UPD Consulting who will be facilitating the strategic plan discussion.

Ms. Stacey Jordan and Ms. Priya Shankar provided a brief background on themselves as well as UPD Consulting. UPD is registered as a minority owned business providing employment and subcontracting opportunity for minorities and women. They have a fundamental belief in the necessity and the value of public sector organizations to improve society and the lives of those who live in it. UPD has been engaged to facilitate board focus groups; identify key priorities from stakeholder focus groups; develop and administer a public survey; create and manage ongoing social media presence; support work sessions to understand Illinois' greatest needs, leveraging its strengths to create a set of values, visions mission and the strategic priorities; and support robust community engagement through virtual focus groups to stakeholders across the state and virtual town hall events. They will then review feedback and finalize a strategic plan.

Executive Director Ostro provided direction on how the strategic plan will develop. IBHE is the state entity charged with completing the Strategy Plan for higher education in Illinois in collaboration with the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) and the Illinois Student Assistance Commission (ISAC). Ms. Ostro stated it is essential that we have broad input and engage people to hear what is on their mind and what their goals are for higher education. Through the process today, the Board will begin to develop a vision and a strategic direction and then ultimately charge to the strategic plan advisory committee, which has not yet been developed.

Ms. Ostro stated if we were not in a pandemic, we would be going out across the state for input but to maintain safety we will be hosting virtual meetings. We will also invite written submissions for those who would prefer to submit reports or ideas. In addition, there are a number of groups already involved in the process—the Boards of the education agencies, IBHE advisory groups such as the Student and Faculty Advisory Councils, presidents of public universities, community colleges, and independent institutions; and stakeholder groups such as the P-20 Council to name a few.

Ms. Jordan reported they have completed Step 1 of the process by holding the first round of focus groups with IBHE, ICCB, and institutional presidents. She stated we are at the second point which is to review input from the focus groups and then to form a vision of the strategic plan and to develop the advisory committee.

Ms. Jordan presented the timeline for the Strategic Plan. She discussed the questions that were presented to the initial focus groups. Ms. Shankar presented a summary of the key things that emerged from those meetings. The topics discussed were 1) why the Strategic Plan is important; 2) what we hope it will achieve; 3) what questions we hope it answers; 4) what success looks like in 5 years, 10 years; and 5) what it will take to close equity gaps in higher education.

Mr. Pranav Kothari thanked them for the overview and asked what they had heard about the role of IBHE. Ms. Shankar stated some focus groups had discussed that there needs to be alignment over people's expectations of what IBHE does and possibly more funding and legislative

changes to match that. She stated that there may be a little bit of mismatch over what is in IBHE's purview of what they can do versus what people think they can do.

Chair Atkinson added that the Board needs to know what the role or structure of IBHE is and what needs to evolve in terms of IBHE. He suggested we should look at the Plan as a way to guide what the Board's work is and discuss once we get through the initial phase.

Ms. Veronica Herrero stated that for today's student(s) it is not a linear path; in fact, it is very winding. When we think about the Strategic Plan does it reflect and respect the education paths of today's students? Ms. Shankar stated that was a good point—it is not linear. Ms. Jordan added that this presentation is the beginning of them synthesizing the information and they are presenting the finer points of what was captured in the first round of focus groups.

Ms. Jordan moved on to a new set of questions that will get us closer to a vision statement for the process going forward. The first question is in regard to the vision statement for IBHE, which is being divided into three parts: 1) What must higher education look like in Illinois so that all students can thrive? 2) What must higher education look like in Illinois so that all families can thrive? and 3) What must higher education look like in Illinois so that all communities can thrive?

Ms. Jordan began the conversation by asking the Board the first question. Discussion followed regarding the value of higher education and measurable outcomes; equity; funding, costs, and affordability; the role of IBHE; and design of the Strategic Plan.

Chair Atkinson stated the importance of meeting workforce demands, how higher education needs to meet societal needs, and how we can prepare students. Graduation rates and employer concerns about talent are important.

Dr. Clarence Wyatt and Mr. Pranav Kothari discussed ways to support equity pathways for every student. They stated we need to address affordability concerns and do more based on what is already working. They want to identify key priorities and be realistic in goals for the Strategic Plan. The goal is to set priorities that are responsive to every student/family/community.

Dr. Derek Douglas, Dr. Kenneth Shaw, Dr. Teresa Garate and Dr. Alice Marie Jacobs discussed support, accessibility, and affordability for each student. They stated we need to be cautious in our intentions because we can have good intentions but unintended consequences. There also needs to be personal accountability for families and students.

Mr. Eric Zarnikow, Ms. Mackenzi Matthews, Ms. Herrero, Dr. Wyatt, and Dr. Garate talked about financial opportunities available to students and the cost of providing education. It was stated that as a State we often make decisions based on what is best for the survival of our institutions versus the successes of our students.

Ms. Veronica Gloria, Dr. Jennifer Delaney, Dr. Douglas and Dr. Wyatt discussed the design of the Strategic Plan. They stated we need partnerships with others and support from all institutions and individuals. They feel we can look at the current realities and constraints and craft a vision around that or put forward the vision and the future we want to see.

Ms. Stacey Jordan asked the Board the next question about what higher education must look like in Illinois so family can thrive. The Board discussed affordability, technology gaps, and diverse pathway to learning for families.

Ms. Matthews and Dr. Delaney discussed financial aid and family assistance. They stated the process can be difficult for some and if we could get past some hurdles, education could be more accessible to more students. The increase of prices going up is making it much harder for students to afford college.

It was discussed how the pandemic has made it difficult for some students and technology gaps need to be addressed. Dr. Delaney talked about online learning and the need for student access to the Internet and technology.

Ms. Jordan presented the last question: What must higher education look like in Illinois so all communities can thrive?

Chair Atkinson asked for clarification on the context of the term communities, i.e., any person, any entity that is affected by higher education. Ms. Jordan stated this is where we could consider workforce, but they want to leave to the group to define. The Board talked what “communities” means in this context: racial/ethnic communities; regional or geographic communities.

Ms. Matthews and Dr. Delaney feel the institutions need to be better at identifying what they have to offer. They stated the real strength of higher education in Illinois is the regional nature, the number and diversity and regional spread of our community colleges. They believe we need to think about a strategic plan in making sure that we have access to educational opportunities at different levels throughout the state. Dr. Evans stated we need to think of ways higher education can be nimble enough to get the many students to re-engage people in higher education, whether they started in Illinois or elsewhere.

Mr. Zarnikow discussed the importance of alignment between education and workforce needs. He stated that communities who do not have robust workforce development opportunities could struggle financially which makes it worse for the people who live in those communities. He feels it is important to make sure that people are well educated for the workforce so communities can thrive. Chair Atkinson agreed and thinks things are different today than they were in March of this year and there are trends that have been accelerated as a result of the pandemic that we need to be mindful of.

Executive Director Ostro discussed conversations with the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity regarding the economic needs of the State and the Governor’s economic development plan from last fall, which outlined high growth industries in the state as areas that they saw great potential for growth. She stated we really need to think about employer demand and how we make sure we match that need.

Dr. Shaw, Ms. Herrero and Dr. Garate stated we should use the word “resilient,” as we have been through so many disruptive changes recently and our universities have shown a lot of resiliency. They feel we are starting to see insights from our young students who are uncertain of the value of education, especially our black and brown students. The other part is how the workforce is receiving

us. Some are receiving their degrees but still not getting jobs or getting jobs at lower salaries. Concern for undocumented populations and students with disabilities should also be addressed.

Ms. Jordan informed the group they will take all this information and will discuss with Executive Director Ostro to report back to the group. The Board will need to sign off on its vision as we move forward with the Strategic Plan. UPD will begin the next phase of work with a series of about 30 focus groups.

Chair Atkinson thanked Ms. Jordan and Ms. Shankar for their presentation and the work they are doing for us. Ms. Jordan stated that UPD will take today's conversation along with the information gathered from the focus groups to provide some options for a vision statement as we move forward.

C. Public Comment

No one registered to provide public comment.

D. Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the Board, Chair Atkinson adjourned the meeting at approximately 11:00 a.m.

Respectfully submitted by Tracy Rembusch, Interim Secretary to the Board.