

**APPROVED**

**DECEMBER 8, 2020**

Item #G-5  
December 8, 2020

**MINUTES – STRATEGIC PLAN BOARD MEETING  
October 26, 2020**

**Submitted for:** Action.

**Summary:** Minutes of the October 26, 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 October 16, 2020 and Executive Order 2020-59.

**Action Requested:** That the Illinois Board of Higher Education approve the minutes of the October 26, 2020, Strategic Plan Board meeting.



STATE OF ILLINOIS  
BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION

**MINUTES – STRATEGIC PLAN BOARD MEETING**  
**October 26, 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 October 16, 2020 and Executive Order 2020-59.

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

Others present: Mark S. Jamil, Burke, Burns & Pinelli, LTD.; Ms. Ginger Ostro, Illinois Board of Higher Education; Dr. Brian Durham, Illinois Community College Board; Dr. Shawn Schumacher, Faculty Advisory Council; Dr. Stephanie Bernoteit, Illinois Board of Higher Education; Mr. Nyle Robinson, Illinois Board of Higher Education; Dr. Arthur Sutton, Illinois Board of Higher Education; Ms. Melissa Hahn, Illinois Board of Higher Education; Ms. Karen Helland, Illinois Board of Higher Education; Ms. Jaimee Ray, 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 the Board is continuing to move on the journey of its Strategic Plan in the midst of a global pandemic. The communities of African Americans, Latinx, rural students and low-income communities experience inequities every single day. For most of these inequities, which are not new, they are not the result of the pandemic—the pandemic only amplifies them and makes them more acute. He stated this work is hard and if it were easy the *Illinois Public Agenda* that was launched over a decade ago would be regarded as a landmark success with soaring attainment rates providing equitable outcomes for all Illinois students, regardless of race, socioeconomic status, or geography. Chair Atkinson thanked the Board for their dedication.

Chair Atkinson stated that in 2009 the *Public Agenda* identified a tale of two states. For one, Illinois was an educated, economically dynamic with a seemingly bright future; the other was struggling to make ends meet. He stated between these two states is a prosperity gap that is wide and growing in the direct result of the disparities, educational attainment by race, ethnicity, income, and region. Chair Atkinson stated that important goals were established, and strategies were

identified and along with the *Public Agenda* the P-20 Council was launched. He stated the 60x25 goal became an important North Star sending Illinois on the right path. He stated a significant amount of energy and dedication by a wide array of educational institutional leaders, nonprofits, unions, professionals, policy makers and citizens have been devoted to the cause. Chair Atkinson stated we have a lot of hard work to do to get where we want to be.

Chair Atkinson reported that the Board had their first opportunity to meet with UPD Consultants at the September 15, 2020 Strategic Plan meeting, and Ms. Stacey Jordan and Ms. Priya Shankar are joining us today to continue this work. The purpose of this meeting is to outline the vision, core principles, and priorities for the IBHE Strategic Plan.

## **B. Presentation and Discussion**

Ms. Stacey Jordan reported that UPD has worked closely with the IBHE, the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB), and the Illinois Student Assistant Commission (ISAC) to help craft today's presentation. She stated the goal today is to engage the Board and review the strategic direction, process, and timeline. The hope is to create some alignment on the vision statement and core principles for the higher education system and to identify priorities to be addressed in the Strategic Plan.

Executive Director Ginger Ostro presented information on the statutory language, which calls for IBHE in cooperation with ICCB to analyze present and future goals, needs, and requirements of higher education; prepare a Strategic Plan (statute calls for a Master Plan; we are using Strategic Plan) for development, expansion, integration, coordination, and efficient utilization of facilities, curricula, and standards in teaching, research and public service; include affordability and accessibility measures; give consideration to problems and attitudes of private junior colleges, colleges and universities, other education groups and institutions; formulate the Strategic Plan; prepare and submit legislation to effectuate the plan; and engage in continuous study, analysis, and evaluation and make recommendations to amend the Strategic Plan as needed. Ms. Ostro stated that we are also working with ISAC and plan to engage the State Board of Education as well.

Ms. Jordan reviewed the timeline for the strategic planning process along with the flow of work. Ms. Jordan stated that phase one of the work has just been completed. They have recently completed focus groups and a survey that yielded 3,000 responses. Ms. Jordan informed the Board they are moving to phase two where they continue to collect survey results and move to the next round of focus group engagement. This outreach will consist of virtual town halls, social media, written submissions, and various levels of input. Executive Director Ostro emphasized that the Board will approve the final Strategic Plan and the expectation is that once formally approved, ICCB and ISAC will formally endorse it. Ms. Ostro recognized that collaboration is included in the work.

Ms. Jordan stated that the Advisory Committee will convene and begin their work in December to January. The Committee's role is to identify goal areas, strategies, and outcome measures. The Board will receive updates at this point. In February and March, UPD will solicit public feedback on the draft plan. The Board will finalize and approve that portion of the Plan and ICCB and ISAC will endorse.

Ms. Jordan presented an overview of the engagement process during phase one. Some of the emerging themes that emerged from the focus groups are equity, costs, operating structure,

instruction, workforce/talent development, and high school transition. Some questions raised from these themes are how we ensure affordability, accessibility and postsecondary attainment for underrepresented students; how we ensure the student supports and culture and climate necessary for underrepresented students; faculty availability; what can the state realistically afford; and how we address student debt.

Ms. Jordan reviewed the feedback received from the Board at the September 15, 2020 meeting. The main themes from that meeting include the value of higher education; closing equity gaps; improving affordability and cost structure of higher education; diverse pathways; clarity on the role of IHBE; communicating the Strategic Plan and getting the support of universities; and the need for a resilient and nimble higher education system.

Ms. Priya Shankar reviewed the results gathered from the survey, which IBHE sent to key stakeholders across the P-20 education continuum, business, community-based organizations, and advocacy organizations and they were encouraged to distribute to their networks. Participants had the opportunity to select up to three out of eight issues, and the most important issues selected were affordability, equity, and attainment. Ms. Shankar stated that equity was the most important issue for Black, Latinx, Asian and indigenous people with over 25 percent who selected this issue. Chair Atkinson mentioned that the survey is still open, and information is still being gathered so some issues may shift. Ms. Shankar answered a question from Ms. Veronica Herrero that survey participation is being captured regarding type of stakeholder and the focus groups will be focused on a regional nature. Ms. Shankar reviewed the eight issues on the survey as cost of higher education; equity; attainment; student supports; quality of instruction; employer/higher education relationship; operating structure of higher education; and high school to college transition.

Mr. Eric Zarnikow asked if UPD had found any of the survey results surprising and how they felt, either the ordering of how people responded or the level of responses. Ms. Shankar responded that the top three issues fell across the higher education landscape so that is something to elevate to the Board.

Executive Director Ostro presented context for the Strategic Plan. She discussed COVID-19 and how it is reshaping the educational experience; changes in the nature of how our work is accelerating; how innovative disrupters to traditional postsecondary are growing and how changes are coming to higher education; and the budget in Illinois and its challenges. Dr. Ken Shaw complimented everyone who put this statement together as we go through these difficult times. Dr. Shaw stated that other conditions are changing in the world of higher education and money will continue to be limited but the Board will try to do the best they can with the resources available. Ms. Herrero added that today's student voices are very important because this is so unprecedented. She feels it is very important to capture their insights and study their behavior so we can respond appropriately.

Ms. Jordan stated that the vision language and the core principles are the backbone for the work going forward. She shared the working vision statement—Illinois has an equitable, innovative, nimble, and aligned higher education ecosystem so that individuals, families, and communities across the state can thrive. She stated the intent of this language is that it will highlight the importance of a student-centered educational experience. The working vision statement also describes the role of higher education to prepare students for careers in civic life, increase postsecondary credit credentials and degree attainment to drive the State's economy, and ultimately contribute to the

growth and human knowledge. Ms. Jordan asked the Board to think about this, conceptually, given the data they have received from the focus groups.

Chair Atkinson, Dr. Shaw, and Mr. Zarnikow stated they liked the statement with Mr. Zarnikow asking if we should include affordability as he is not sure equitable covers that. Ms. Mackeni Matthews is hoping equitable would also include accessibility. She feels equitable has a lot of different routes it can take. Mr. Pranav Kothari warned against overloading a vision statement with lots of concepts. He feels we should have a vision statement and then offer additional details of what that looks like; Ms. Matthews also feels we do not want the statement to be too lengthy. Discussion followed with thoughts from Dr. Alice Marie Jacobs, Ms. Veronica Gloria, Ms. Herrero, Dr. Andrea Evans, Mr. Zarnikow, and Ms. Matthews on ways to prepare the vision statement and possible expansion of the “what this means” bullet points. Chair Atkinson stated we have had some good feedback and the Board is trying to build a consensus around what the vision statement looks like. Dr. Jennifer Delaney added affordability, accessibility and upward mobility would be good to add.

Ms. Jordan asked the question about what accessibility means. She stated the historic strength of the American higher education system has been there is always a second chance and another opportunity for entry. She feels that is part of accessibility as well. Ms. Gloria and Ms. Herrero stated that we have more non-traditional students that are the “new traditional.” This includes families who may need childcare and working adults who need more accessible hours for classes, students with disabilities, first generation students, and immigrant students as well as accessibility of early college opportunities. Chair Atkinson stated he is proud that Illinois is one of the few states that allows funding for undocumented students, and we need to be thinking about immigrants more broadly. Ms. Jordan stated this has been a good level of engagement and conversation. She indicated affordability, operability and accessibility are three areas that should be considered for “what this means” concepts.

Ms. Jordan reviewed the six Core Principles: students being a priority; an equity driven system; a varied system; embracing our role in developing the educator workforce and being part of the P-20 education continuum; higher education enriching lives; and talent driving our economy. Mr. Kothari asked how they see the vision, the bullet points under the vision and how they work together. Executive Director Ostro stated this is open for the Board to discuss but believes we should have the vision statement and then the items below that should focus on what it means to unpack that vision. She said those could act as a checklist to make sure we are meeting all principles. Chair Atkinson, Dr. Shaw and Ms. Gloria discussed civic engagement and stated this needs to be addressed in the statement.

Ms. Jordan identified the priorities for the Strategic Plan with the first question being the best period of time to achieve the goals: 1) credential attainment, 2) closing equity gaps and 3) improving affordability and access to manage costs. Chair Atkinson stated there is a misunderstanding of the Board’s role and the Strategic Plan and that the ten-year period is not actually in the statute. Dr. Shaw suggested a very careful review each year with a three-year period where we seriously consider if our goals are being attained. He feels if we push it further out it does not work; and after three years we may say we are going in the right direction and push forward and if not, we can possibly change one of our priorities. Mr. Kothari and Mr. Zarnikow feel ten-years is a good timeframe because it is practical reality with students graduating or re-engaging to get credentials but agree we need regular reviews.

Ms. Jordan stated she is hearing consideration for a six to ten-year goal with milestone review that could be annual or to be determined. Chair Atkinson stated he feels the Board is comfortable with a timeline that is enough to make sure we are able to actually get some results, but we really want to have status checks and metrics that are showing progress. Mr. Zarnikow and Ms. Herrero added we need to make sure that the measures match up with the timing of the reporting for those measures and we need to make sure the bullets below our vision statement are clear to be successful at achieving our vision. Executive Director Ostro stated we should use the bullet points a little differently than what might be in the core principles.

Ms. Jordan added that the language shown is based on the data and the focus groups but there is alignment with the three bullets. She stated the language and the topics emerged from what was expressed in the focus groups as the primary areas of interest. Ms. Ostro shared that the priorities were narrowed to three because to ensure the plan is strategic, that we focus on a few main things that need to be addressed.

Ms. Jordan stated that the Board has received details about the Strategic Planning process, the timeline, the role of the Board, and the process on the emerging themes based on the data gathered today. The Board has reviewed, discussed, and aligned generally upon core principles and the vision timeline around accomplishing the goals that have been set. Ms. Jordan stated the next phase of the work will be to gather information and feedback on the vision and priorities to make sure that it is an inclusive process and that others have an opportunity to provide feedback. She stated the Executive Committee is going to finalize the vision and the priorities by processing the feedback received today and from the public. Ms. Jordan thanked the Board for their time and engagement today and looks forward to meeting with them again to provide updates.

Chair Atkinson thanked his fellow Board members for their thoughtful and highly engaged discussion. He also thanked Ms. Jordan and Ms. Shankar for their efforts to provide this information. Chair Atkinson stated that ICCB Executive Director, Brian Durham and ISAC's Executive Director Eric Zarnikow have been great partners to develop this North Star and some core principles. He expressed his appreciation to all stakeholders who have participated and helped to shape the vision principles and their engagement in the focus groups. He stated the Strategic Plan process is on the IBHE website and the survey is still open if anyone would like to forward that link. Chair Atkinson stated that the Board is committed to an open dialogue as it moves forward. There will be a lot of opportunities in the weeks and months ahead for everybody to voice the views, suggestions, and ideas.

### **C. Public Comment**

Dr. Amy Carr, Western Illinois University, requested to provide public comment. Dr. Carr is a member of the Faculty Advisory Council (FAC) and active in many FAC conversations. She stated she is glad to see that expanding knowledge for the Strategic Plan is one of the concerns, and she would like to see the importance of scholarship and research in a variety of fields and disciplines viewed as part of the common good for the State of Illinois. She hopes the process of the Strategic Plan does not lose sight of what higher education is about. Dr. Carr expressed the idea that there are two threats to the importance of scholarship and research—one is the State-mandated low producing programs report and the second is about micro-credentialing and alternative pathways to getting course credit including dual credit. She stated the FAC is close to finalizing a position paper on dual credit. She raised a concern about the outsourcing of faculty labor to high school teachers in the provision of dual credit courses. The issue she would like the Board bear in mind is

the importance of higher education to continue to have historians, philosophers, geologists, physicists, literary scholars, foreign language, African American studies scholars, and is it important to support scholarship and research in these fields. She stated another aspect about equity is having a robust K-12 education that allows students to hit the ground running when they arrive at college. Dr. Carr thanked the Board for allowing her to speak.

**D. Adjournment**

There being no further business to come before the Board, Chair Atkinson adjourned the meeting at approximately 10:35 a.m.

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