

APPROVED

AUGUST 10, 2021

Item #D-2
August 10, 2021

**MINUTES – STRATEGIC PLAN BOARD MEETING
June 15, 2021**

Submitted for: Action.

Summary: Minutes of the June 15, 2021, 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, the Illinois Governor’s Disaster Proclamation dated May 28, 2021, and Executive Order 2021-11.

Action Requested: That the Illinois Board of Higher Education approve the minutes of the June 15, 2021, Board meeting.



STATE OF ILLINOIS
BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION

MINUTES – STRATEGIC PLAN BOARD MEETING
June 15, 2021

A meeting of the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) was called to order at 2:00 p.m. via telephone and video conference as permitted by Public Act 101-0640 enacted June 12, 2020, the Illinois Governor’s Disaster Proclamation dated May 28, 2021, and Executive Order 2021-11.

The following Board members were present via video conference: John Atkinson, Chair, Jennifer Delaney, Derek Douglas, Andrea Evans, Jennifer Garrison, Veronica Gloria, Alice Marie Jacobs, Pranav Kothari, Kenneth Shaw, and Eric Zarnikow.

Others present via video conference: Mr. Mark S. Jamil, Burke, Burns & Pinelli, LTD.; Ms. Ginger Ostro, Illinois Board of Higher Education; Dr. Larry Dietz, Illinois State University; Dr. Lisa Freeman, Northern Illinois University; Dr. Gloria Gibson, Northeastern Illinois University; Dr. David Glassman, Eastern Illinois University; Dr. Zaldwaynaka Scott, Chicago State University; Dr. Brian Durham, Illinois Community College Board; Ms. Joan Knox, Federation of Independent Illinois Colleges and Universities; Mr. Jeremy Oberfeld, Proprietary Advisory Committee; Ms. Angela Szczepanik-Sanchez, Disabilities Advisory Committee; Dr. Stephanie Bernoteit, Illinois Board of Higher Education (present in person at IBHE offices); 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.

The meeting was conducted via telephone and video conference as allowed by Public Act 101-0640 and roll call votes were recorded for each matter acted upon. The IBHE’s Executive Deputy Director was physically present at the IBHE offices. The audio of the meeting was recorded and may be requested on the IBHE website.

A. Call to Order/Roll Call

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

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

B. Presentation and Discussion

Chair Atkinson announced that today is an important day for higher education in Illinois and that it is filled with optimism that comes with the realization that we have unmatched potential for our State and for all our residents to thrive. The Board of Higher Education has the statutory responsibility for creating and sustaining a world class system of colleges and universities and other postsecondary education providers through the development of a Strategic Plan for higher

education. This Plan has been almost a year in the making encompassing the input from many stakeholders, including nearly 10,000 survey respondents and 170 people through focus groups. Board members developed a vision, core principles, and priorities for the Plan and empowered an advisory committee, composed of 37 diverse leaders from education, business, civic and philanthropic organizations around the state, to shepherd the work. Chair Atkinson stated that the advisory committee was led by four dedicated and engaged co-chairs and had nine design work groups composed of over 200 stakeholders, including IBHE Board members and representatives from the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB), the Illinois Student Assistance Commission (ISAC), trustees, presidents, faculty and staff.

Chair Atkinson reported that the Plan will lay the groundwork for what this Board and stakeholders around the state believe is both a moral and an economic imperative for Illinois – that Illinois residents and their communities thrive, regardless of race, ethnic background, geography or family income. Chair Atkinson discussed the impact of the budget impasse and stated that Governor Pritzker and the General Assembly continue to work to improve the fiscal condition of Illinois. He noted appreciation for their continued support. Chair Atkinson shared that a thriving Illinois is not only possible, but that our higher education system is in a unique position to turn that possibility into a sustained reality. He shared that colleges and universities are among the most important economic engines as our institutions educate over 750,000 students annually and employ over 165,000 people across the state.

Chair Atkinson reported that the Plan has three basic goals: 1) equity in outcomes—we can no longer accept the system that leaves too many of our residents behind depriving them of the opportunity to thrive; 2) sustainability and funding—we need an equitable, stable, and sufficient funding system that our institutions and our students and families can rely on and 3) economic growth, specifically, we must increase our talent base. These three goals will have 25 strategies, which will be the basis of the work ahead. He expressed that we live in a great state blessed with resources such as good farmland, lots of water, some of the best infrastructure anywhere in America, with 12 public universities, 48 community colleges, and over 100 independent institutions, as well as over 40 out-of-state universities with a presence in Illinois and more than 250 additional postsecondary training programs. He is very optimistic about the future and said this is a very exciting time for higher education in Illinois and for the future of our state.

Whereupon Board Member Clarence Wyatt entered the meeting.

Executive Director Ginger Ostro began her presentation on an overview of the Strategic Plan. She expressed that higher education has always been a path to a better future for individuals, and our world class higher education system has changed millions of lives and made our state an economic powerhouse. A thriving Illinois has an inclusive economy and broad prosperity with equitable paths to opportunity for all, especially those facing the greatest barriers. She stated that for too long African Americans, Latinx, low income, rural, and working adult students have been left behind.

The plan we are launching today, *A Thriving Illinois: Higher Education Paths to Equity, Sustainability, and Growth* contains 25 strategies to lead us to a vision of a thriving Illinois. The Plan was very consciously developed with broad stakeholder engagement, starting with preliminary focus groups and a survey that reached nearly 10,000 respondents. Ms. Ostro reported that this early input helped the Board shape its vision and three goals, and subsequent focus groups identified the barriers and opportunities for each goal. This acted as a foundation for the 37-

member advisory committee and nine design work groups which led to the strategies included in the Plan. The Board held five meetings throughout this time to receive updates and to provide feedback. The Board established a set of core principles and developed and evaluated each of the strategies to make sure the core principles were fulfilled.

Executive Director Ostro discussed the disparities and attainment outcomes that were discovered by race and ethnicity. She also reported on data relating to rural students, African Americans, Latinx, and adult students. To sustain a thriving state, we must create a much more equitable reality, and the strategies in the Plan are designed to close equity gaps. She provided an overview of some of these strategies. Talent management and research-based hiring practices can help institutions recruit and retain employees of color at all levels by developing specific outreach and supports. Under a direct admissions program, students are automatically notified of admissions to all participating two- and four-year institutions for which they meet admission criteria. Ms. Ostro said this strategy is in conjunction with Illinois recently implemented Common Application for public universities which simplifies the college search and application process.

Executive Director Ostro remarked that for higher education to be financially sustainable for learners, it must be affordable. Affordability is a significant barrier to higher education access and success, especially for the many who have been underserved. In fiscal year 2002, the Monetary Award Program (MAP) covered 100 percent of the average tuition and fees at Illinois public universities and community colleges. However, the fiscal year 2020 MAP awards dropped to 34 percent of average tuition and fees at universities and 36 percent in community colleges. Ms. Ostro noted that Governor Pritzker and the General Assembly have made significant increases in MAP funding. Additional strategies to improve financial sustainability are outlined in the Strategic Plan.

Ms. Ostro stated that the strategies for the Plan also ensure the higher education system will continue to be the engine of developing talent, innovation, and inclusive economic growth for a thriving Illinois. The Illinois Innovation Network includes university-based regional hubs designed to drive inclusive innovation, equitable workforce development and sustainable economic growth. The Plan also calls for a business and employer advisory council to be created to invest and partner in the development of a diverse talent pipeline. She said we will encourage high school graduates to stay in Illinois through the Common Application and direct admissions program; and we will launch a public institution consortium to streamline, coordinate, and improve access to credentials and degree completion for the current early childhood educator workforce.

Executive Director Ostro reported that the 25 strategies outlined in *A Thriving Illinois* will require determined, ongoing action. We must hold ourselves accountable, and accountability should be a cycle of continuous improvement. As a next step, we will begin work with institutions to develop equity plans and practices, and for the business and employer advisory council, we will develop a charter and begin to identify those who will participate. She reported that work is already underway to launch the early childhood educator consortium. We will also focus on implementation of learning renewal and social emotional supports, engaging adults in higher education, and strengthening the transfer infrastructure.

Ms. Ostro stated that higher education has always been a path to a better future for individuals, communities, and the state of Illinois. She said the challenge of the next decade is to focus on creating broad, sustainable, and equitable paths to a prosperous future for every learner,

leader, and community. Ms. Ostro expressed we can do this with a commitment to a higher education ecosystem that reinforces equity, sustainability, and growth.

President of Chicago State University, Zaldwaynaka Scott, and co-chair of the advisory committee expressed how pleased she was to be on the team that assembled this Plan. Dr. Scott noted that the Plan will help all students and citizens of Illinois, particularly those who have been historically underserved and underrepresented. She stated she is looking forward to working with stakeholders across Illinois to produce equitable outcomes and increase degree attainment.

Mr. Pat McGuire, former Illinois State Senator and co-chair of the advisory committee informed the group that in the summer of 2017, IBHE asked him and a group of legislators with higher education responsibilities to meet regarding several initiatives it was about to launch. He stated that the higher education working group was then created. Mr. McGuire discussed the Plan and noted that it is comprehensive and well researched. He commented that the credit goes to IBHE Board members led by Chair Atkinson, IBHE staff led by Executive Director Ostro, and ICCB staff led by Dr. Brian Durham.

Ms. Betsy Ziegler, CEO of 1871 and co-chair, shared that she had the privilege of working in higher education for about eight years at Northwestern University. She believes it is important to emphasize that businesses and employers need to partner with higher education. Ms. Ziegler noted that it is important for everyone to be on the same side of the table to develop the talent needed to grow our economy.

Whereupon Board Member Veronica Herrero entered the meeting.

C. Public Comment

President Lisa Freeman of Northern Illinois University (NIU) congratulated Chair Atkinson and Executive Director Ostro on the Strategic Plan which provides clear direction about how the Illinois higher education ecosystem must work to support students, families, and communities. She stated that the three overarching goals are admirable and attainable and that we must close equity gaps for students who have been left behind. Dr. Freeman commented that NIU and all Illinois public universities are committed to advancing the objectives of the Strategic Plan.

Representative Katie Stuart, Chair of the Higher Education Working Group, noted that she has been a champion of higher education since being involved in teaching at the Southern Illinois University Edwardsville. She remarked she is excited to see the Plan in place and to work along with IBHE to achieve the goals set forth in the Plan.

Ms. Cherita Ellens, President and CEO of Women Employed, expressed her appreciation of the critical intentionality in bringing multiple diverse voices into this process. Women Employed is in full support of the Board's vision and core principles and will continue to work in partnership to achieve closing the equity gaps for students who have been left behind.

Dr. Josh Bullock, President of Lakeland College and Chair of the Illinois Council of Community College Presidents, thanked IBHE and Executive Director Ostro for inviting so many higher education stakeholders to have a voice in developing the state's next Strategic Plan for the future of education in Illinois. Dr. Bullock expressed that he is very optimistic that higher education is truly on a path to increase postsecondary credential and degree attainment. Dr. Bullock voiced on behalf of the

community college presidents that they are looking forward to working collaboratively to bring to life this very comprehensive plan and the strategy's outlined for the betterment of our students and the future of our state.

Whereupon Board Member Derek Douglas left the meeting.

Dr. Marlon Cummings, Governors State University, spoke on behalf of the Faculty Advisory Council (FAC). He reported that most FAC members participated in the Strategic Plan survey and the town hall meetings, and there was additional engagement and participation in the working groups. Dr. Cummings voiced that the FAC will continue their active engagement throughout the Strategic Plan implementation process, and they are in full support of the Plan. The FAC believes it will aid individuals and families in Illinois to have increased access to higher education and provide greater opportunities to improve affordability and close equity gaps.

Mr. Kyle Westbrook, Executive Director of Partnership for College Completion, informed the group his organization is focused on policy and practices to close equity gaps and degree completion for Black, Brown, and low-income students in Illinois. The Partnership for College Completion supports the new Strategic Plan. He added that a few elements that resonate with them is closing equity gaps along racial lines while ensuring that rural students are included; the need for institutions to develop equity plans or explicit roadmaps for how they will close those respective gaps; and support for equitable, sufficient, and stable funding for Illinois.

Ms. Joan Knox from the Federal of Illinois Independent Colleges and Universities noted that she is speaking on behalf of the over 60 private institutions in the state of Illinois. She said they are thankful for an inclusive and comprehensive review of the higher education system and concrete recommendations to improve the system. Ms. Knox added they look forward to working with their public university and community college counterparts to reach the goals outlined in the Strategic Plan.

Ms. Ja'Neane Minor, Director of Government Relations at Advance Illinois, remarked that Illinois needs a higher education system that centers around equitable access and supports persistence and completion of our students. She added that recognizing the challenges and detrimental problems facing our system today and facing these problems as the Strategic Plan has done is precisely the approach we need. Ms. Minor discussed our current funding approach in Illinois and believes the Strategic Plan set strong goals for an equitable funding formula. Advance Illinois looks forward to continuing to work with the diverse group of stakeholders. Ms. Minor remarked they also appreciate and echo the need for strategies to address the need for a high-quality educator workforce in Illinois.

D. Action Item

Chair Atkinson acknowledged and thanked the Board members, advisory committee co-chairs, IBHE Board member Pranav Kothari, the design work groups, Presidents and Chancellors of the public universities who participated, Brian Durham and ICCB staff, Eric Zarnikow and ISAC staff, Executive Deputy Director Stephanie Bernoteit, and Deputy Director for Information Management and Research, Eric Lichtenberger for their contributions. He also extended a special thank you on behalf of the Board to Executive Director Ginger Ostro for her leadership of the strategic planning process.

Dr. Kenneth Shaw remarked how proud he is to have played a small role in this planning process and is proud of what the Plan is emphasizing. He is glad there is an emphasis on an action plan and a focus on accountability and implementation.

Dr. Andrea Evans acknowledged Ms. Ostro for her leadership in this planning process and is proud to be a part of the process. She stated you cannot have a higher education system that is excellent unless it is both diverse and equitable.

Mr. Pranav Kothari shared that he had served as a facilitator with the design teams. He added how proud he is of the three big goals of the product and the deep commitment to so many students and families across Illinois. He was pleased to have served on a design work group and to be a part of this incredible effort.

Dr. Jennifer Garrison expressed her hopes to focus on communication across the P-20 spectrum. She added that many superintendents, principals, and teachers are going to celebrate this Plan, and we need to make sure we communicate it so that we can all start to focus on this collaboration. She asked that we continue to focus on the student voice.

Dr. Jennifer Delaney added that we do need to stay student-focused and focused on equity. She noted that we also need to look at how we are doing as a hybrid system and serving our most vulnerable students by increasing MAP. She appreciates the Plan's strategy on funding and what that means for institutions and for students and knows there is work to be done.

Ms. Veronica Herrero expressed how incredibly proud she is of this Plan. She discussed the crisis our state was facing and how there was little acknowledgement about the equity gaps or how we were failing our Black, Latinx, and rural students. She added that it also encourages and reflects a collaborative system of the two- and four-year institutions, the private institutions, and with the employers, all who are critical partners in this work.

Ms. Veronica Gloria remarked that we cannot just hope things will get better—we need to be actively engaged in making things better and she feels that is what this Plan does because it is so concrete and gives direct action in terms of moving forward. She is appreciative of those who made sure that Spanish speakers were engaged in this process.

Mr. Eric Zarnikow discussed the implementation of the Plan with one key being money. He added we will all need to be advocates to achieve the goals of the Plan. He feels it is a great Plan and will be asking the ISAC board to endorse it.

Dr. Alice Marie Jacobs added that it has been exciting to watch this Plan unfold and to see the final product.

1. Consideration and Approval of *A Thriving Illinois: Higher Education Paths to Equity, Sustainability, and Growth*.

The Illinois Board of Higher Education on motion made by Mr. Pranav Kothari and seconded by Dr. Jennifer Delaney, unanimously approved A Thriving Illinois: Higher Education Paths to Equity, Sustainability, and Growth.

The vote was:

Yeas: Atkinson, Delaney, Evans, Garrison, Gloria, Herrero, Jacobs, Kothari, Shaw, Wyatt and Zarnikow

E. Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the Board, on motion by Dr. Clarence Wyatt, second by Ms. Veronica Gloria, and by unanimous vote the meeting was adjourned at approximately 3:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Tracy Rembusch, Secretary to the Board.