

APPROVED
JUNE 8, 2021

June 8, 2021

MINUTES – STRATEGIC PLAN BOARD MEETING
February 23, 2021

Submitted for: Action.

Summary: Minutes of the February 23, 2021, 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, the Illinois Governor’s Disaster Proclamation dated February 5, 2021, and Executive Order 2021-04.

Action Requested: That the Illinois Board of Higher Education approve the minutes of the February 23, 2021, Strategic Plan Board meeting.

STATE OF ILLINOIS
BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION

MINUTES – STRATEGIC PLAN BOARD MEETING
February 23, 2021

A meeting of the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) was called to order at 2 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 February 5, 2021, and Executive Order 2021-04.

The following Board members were present via video conference: Max Coffey, Maria Cruz, Jennifer Delaney, Derek Douglas, Andrea Evans, Teresa Garate, 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. Gloria Gibson, Northeastern Illinois University; Dr. David Glassman, Eastern Illinois University; Dr. Cheryl Green, Governors State University; Dr. Austin Lane, Southern Illinois University; Dr. Dan Mahony, Southern Illinois University; Dr. Brian Durham, Illinois Community College Board; Mr. Jeremy Oberfeld, Propriety Advisory Committee; Dr. Shawn Schumacher, Faculty Advisory Council; Ms. Angela Szczepanik-Sanchez, Disability Advisory Committee; Dr. Stephanie Bernoteit, Illinois Board of Higher Education (present in person at IBHE offices); Dr. Eric Lichtenberger, 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; and Ms. Tracy Rembusch, Illinois Board of Higher Education.

The meeting was conducted by 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 and Remarks, Chair John Atkinson**

Interim Board Secretary Rembusch took roll call. A quorum was present.

Legal Counsel Mark Jamil noted that Chair Atkinson and Vice Chairperson Herrero were both unable to attend today's meeting and that the Board may designate an Acting Chairperson to serve in this capacity for this meeting only.

The Illinois Board of Higher Education on motion made by Dr. Jennifer Delaney and seconded by Mr. Derek Douglas unanimously approved that Mr. Pranav Kothari be designated as the Acting Chairperson for the February 23, 2021 Strategic Plan meeting. The vote was:

*Yeas: Coffey, Cruz, Delaney, Douglas, Evans, Garate, Gloria, Jacobs, Kothari, Shaw, Zarnikow
Nays: None*

Acting Chairperson Kothari reported that the Board has convened an advisory committee to help develop the Strategic Plan, and he has been serving as the Board liaison to that committee. He stated the advisory committee is co-chaired by four outstanding Illinois leaders – Chicago State University President Zaldwaynaka Scott; City Colleges of Chicago Chancellor Juan Salgado; Former Illinois State Senator Pat McGuire; and 1871 CEO Betsy Ziegler. He thanked them for their leadership and willingness to take on this very important role.

Acting Chairperson Kothari also thanked the members of the advisory committee for their dedication of time and expertise to the strategic planning process. He stated the committee members and co-chairs were formally announced in January, and they are listed on the IBHE website. He commented that each advisory committee member brings a wealth of experience and diverse perspectives to this work. Today's meeting features a preliminary report on the work of the advisory committee and the subcommittees which are referred to as design work groups.

B. Presentation and Discussion

Ms. Stacey Jordan from UPD, the consulting group providing support for the strategic planning process, provided a review of the work to date which began last fall. She highlighted the various forms of stakeholder engagement during this time and described how this stakeholder engagement has informed the work of the Board and the advisory committee. She showed a chart detailing how the deliberations of design work groups will support the overall process.

Whereupon Board Member Jennifer Garrison entered the meeting.

Executive Director Ginger Ostro highlighted the working priorities developed from stakeholder engagement and the Board's discussion around the three top things the state needs to do to achieve the vision of the strategic plan. These three priorities are closing equity gaps, increasing attainment, and ensuring affordability. All three priorities are very much intersecting, and none of them can be achieved without the other.

Acting Chairperson Kothari reported there are nine design work groups with varying numbers of participants, and he is most involved with the Future of Work, Future of Learning design work group. He stated that they launched with outside expertise bringing in speakers to set the stage for context on the issues that need to be addressed. They reviewed the preliminary strategies and refined some of them which included rephrasing, adding new ones, and prioritizing them. Acting Chairperson Kothari discussed the ten-year window for the Strategic Plan and the need to identify metrics along the way to know we are making progress. He stated that future meetings will be a continued refinement of the strategies and indicators so that it all feeds into the Strategic Plan. Acting Chairperson Kothari noted that one idea was to bring in ideas from outside Illinois, and the IBHE staff has put together lists of state and national resources for all the design work groups. He reported that the other push was to make sure our plans are bold enough coming out of this process while recognizing fiscal and logistical constraints. Acting Chairperson Kothari noted that many people are dedicating a lot of time to this because it is such important work. Board Member Derek Douglas asked about the timeline. Acting Chairperson Kothari noted all design work groups should finish by mid-to-late March.

Whereupon Board Member Clarence Wyatt entered the meeting.

Executive Director Ostro introduced the first three work groups that will share their preliminary work with the Board: Financial Aid and Student Debt; Manage Costs; and High School, College, and Career Connections. This gives the Board an opportunity to provide feedback and have early input.

Executive Director Ostro provided highlights from the Financial Aid and Student Debt design work group. This group grounded their deliberations in data shared with the Board about equity gaps and disparities for low-income students versus non- low-income students. Ms. Ostro indicated the group is focusing on the need for a regular pattern of increasing investment to the Monetary Award Program (MAP). Last fiscal year approximately 53,000 students were eligible for MAP funding but did not receive a grant because the monies had run out; 72 percent of those were community college students. The design work group is developing options on how to address this issue without taking resources away from one set of students to give to another. There was also discussion around MAP for year-round study. The design work group is also looking at the total cost of attendance, recognizing that students struggle not just with covering tuition and fees but course materials, living expenses, housing, food, and childcare.

Additionally, the design work group discussed:

- Student emergency aid and how it can be incredibly powerful as seen in the first days of the pandemic;
- The AIM HIGH merit-based program and how it has addressed equity issues; and
- Strategies for completion of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) with attention to the fact that the number of low-income students completing the application has dropped.

Executive Director Ostro noted that the next meeting of this design work group will focus specifically on student debt while continuing to build out strategies on the issues highlighted today. Dr. Josh Bullock, a member of the working group and president of Lake Land College, talked about the idea of merit-based aid. He stated that the group had a long conversation about how merit can be differently defined and recognized such as skill as an automotive technician, or something that really does not fall into the traditional concepts of merit-based aid.

Dr. Kenneth Shaw discussed student debt and whether to consider paying off some of the debt and how to determine who or which field would receive that. He believes there are ways to do this so that it gets where the statewide need is greatest. Dr. Alice Marie Jacobs discussed student debt and extending that to family debt, specifically grandparents. She stated there may be some who have signed student loan papers not understanding the ramifications. She feels we have a responsibility to not just students but also their families.

Dr. Clarence Wyatt stated we need to be cognizant of the possible changes coming from federal policy, particularly statements about free tuition at public institutions for families below a certain income threshold. He stated that can be a great benefit for many families but can be a concern for private institutions.

Mr. Derek Douglas congratulated the committee on great strategies. He feels we need a process for institutions to do a better job of keeping track of students who need to drop out due to financial restraints. Dr. Andrea Evans agreed but questioned how we deal with it in terms of student emergency aid and how the Strategic Plan might address that.

Dr. Teresa Garate asked about the next step of implementing these strategies and if we will have substantially increased affordability in Illinois. She asked how we are defining substantial affordability and is this something the group will continue to work on. Ms. Ostro stated it is a question for the design work group, the advisory committee and for the Board as the plan comes together and should be a question we ask over and over until we feel confident that we have fully answered it.

Mr. Eric Zarnikow discussed Fiscal Year 2022 budgets and the money to increase MAP. He also spoke about loan forgiveness and stated we already have three programs in place. He feels if we are going to do a loan forgiveness program it should go to those who have smaller amounts of student loan debt and have defaulted, which can be students who started but did not complete and therefore did not improve their economic status. He noted the reason AIM HIGH was started was to keep students in Illinois. Dr. Jennifer Delaney added the Board should think about affordability and savings. The magic of compound interest over time can help families save for college and put less pressure on financial programs at the moment of enrollment. Dr. Andrea Evans asked if we knew the percentage of students currently using the savings program. Dr. Delaney deferred to Mr. Zarnikow but stated that legislation has passed to offer a \$50 baby bond to every child born in Illinois. Mr. Zarnikow was not sure of the percentage but stated that many families are enrolled in Bright Start or Bright Directions run by the Treasurer's Office but that helps more middle-class to upper middle-class families.

Executive Director Ostro described the deliberations of the Manage Costs design work group. She stated this group is tackling how to bend the cost curve, and they have three strategies they are focusing on. The group started by looking at the systems, policies, and practices that are governed by state rules, such as civil service which governs human resource practices, employee benefits which are governed by the State's Central Management Services system, and the retirement system. The group discussed if there was an opportunity where these types of expertise can be housed regionally or statewide. The group also reviewed student health insurance and whether a broader risk pool would both increase negotiating power and spread costs more equitably across the state.

Dr. Shaw stated if we are serious about cost savings, we need to look at personnel. We need to make sure both faculty and staff are developing in their jobs. Mr. Douglas asked about the amount we would be saving because sometimes shared services can be some significant lifting and not result in a huge amount of savings. Dr. Jacobs mentioned the Midwestern Higher Education Compact (MHEC). Dr. Delaney said they do joint contracts there as well. She feels if we can streamline things and do shared services and joint purchasing that could be a savings. Dr. Delaney named other services that could be streamlined such as professional memberships, mandatory training, facilities and services, and food services. Ms. Ostro stated she would take these suggestions back to the working group.

Dr. Brian Durham, Executive Director of the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) presented an overview of the High School, College, and Career Connection design work group's efforts to date. Dr. Durham commented that many students face a lot of barriers when transferring from high school to college and career, particularly students of color, low-income students, and first-generation students. He reported it has been difficult during the pandemic, and there will be challenges going forward. Dr. Durham discussed the P-20 Council's effort with the Governor's Office to address the issue of learning loss and learning renewal for students in and coming out of the

pandemic. The P-20 Council has developed a resource guide with the goal of helping early childhood settings, schools, and institutions support student learning and overall well-being.

In addition to considering the impacts of the pandemic, this design work group discussed:

- Summer bridge programs and other extended learning opportunities to accelerate the acquisition of skills and mitigate learning gaps;
- Scaling and evaluating work to improve high school to college transitions such as the implementation of transitional math and transitional English courses. These are being implemented in 195 high schools across the state and are designed to reduce the need for remediation in postsecondary settings;
- Work-based learning internships, apprenticeships, or summer internships;
- Improving early college access, especially for underserved students and underserved areas of the state; and
- Expanding college access and support models such as counselors, peer mentors, ISACorps, and other programs.

Addressing outmigration, Acting Chairperson Kothari mentioned that so much of this work interacts with the Illinois State Board of Education's (ISBE) strategic plan and asked if there are particular strategies with this topic that are being focused on as well. Dr. Durham agreed there is significant overlap.

Dr. Jacobs asked when outmigration in Illinois started and when did the Illinois rate become higher than the national average. Ms. Ostro stated we have new data on this, but it has not been compiled yet; however, this is a long-term trend. Mr. Zarnikow stated we were 49 out of the 50 states for outmigration, and this may have been going on 20 years or more.

Dr. Durham asked the Board to think about any strategies that might be missing from the list. Dr. Evans stated we need to build relationships with high school counselors and university enrollment management professionals and then to career professionals. She discussed the work of the P-20 Council to help build bridges between different entities. Dr. Durham agreed this is something that needs to be addressed and to utilize the research done by the P-20 Council. Dr. Delaney stated we need to think about multiple approaches, financial combined with mental health and academic supports. There are many great programs, but we also need to focus on the students as they are moving through the pipeline because they are looking at things differently; for example, they do not think about MAP funds, they just know they need financial assistance. She expressed we need to think about the ways in which students experience these transitions.

Acting Chairperson Kothari stated we need to recognize the flow of the different work groups so we do not end up with nine sets of strategies but, rather, there is some nesting and connection amongst them. Ms. Ostro agreed.

Dr. Jennifer Garrison questioned if there should be a specific goal for access to early college. She feels there should be and that when something has a target and is measured, we are more likely to see more universities and community colleges get on board. Dr. Garrison appreciated the bold strategy.

Executive Director Ostro thanked the Board for their feedback. She reported that the next update will have more information about strategies under development from the remaining design work groups. She asked Board Members to let her know of additional questions or comments.

Ms. Stacey Jordan reviewed the next steps including the March 31 meeting where there will be an opportunity to review the Strategic Plan with full updates from all nine design work groups. The advisory committee meets on April 13, and the week of April 26 there will be a final draft posted for public comment and town halls. On May 13, it is anticipated the IBHE will take final action on the Strategic Plan. Ms. Ostro noted that the timeline is different than originally estimated so there is plenty of opportunity for public comment and input. She noted with appreciation the willingness of advisory committee members to stay on for the additional meetings.

Acting Chairperson Kothari thanked Ginger, Brian, and Josh for their presentations and the advisory committee and design work groups as well as the Board for their great questions and input.

C. Reports and Updates

- **Advisory Committee Report – Faculty Advisory Council**

Dr. Shawn Schumacher, Chair of the Faculty Advisory Council (FAC), expressed the view of the FAC that the emphasis of expanding early college is not aligned to support scholarship and research. Dr. Schumacher reported that students who anticipate attending four-year institutions with most or all of their General Education requirements completed will have a shorter time at that institution and so much less opportunity to be mentored by professors and drawn into undergraduate research. He stated these research programs are key to recruiting top-notch students to our institutions and keeping them in the State of Illinois. Additionally, expanding early college in the name of equity often fosters new forms of inequity by limiting how many early college courses can transfer. Dr. Schumacher concluded that the FAC perceives that scholarship and research need to be more strongly addressed in the strategic plan.

Dr. Schumacher discussed the recommendations of the FAC:

- Add a design group whose specific aim is to assess the alignment of every strategic priority strategy with the core principle “Higher education is a public good,” with particular attention to each strategy’s potential.
- Limit early college that can fulfill the General Education Core Curriculum.
- Rather than diverting state resources to early college opportunities, invest in the institutions that support scholarship and research. Adequately fund public universities and community colleges so that tuition costs can be driven down.
- Create public-private partnerships that connect research findings to the needs of industries, business, and local to global communities.
- Invest in opportunities for part-time independent scholarship and research by those without college or university teaching positions who are employed outside of academia.

- If the above recommendations are not pursued, FAC suggest streamlining secondary to postsecondary higher education not only in the direction of credentialing, but in the direction of scholarship and research. High school teachers who offer dual credit courses should contribute to scholarship and research in the fields they teach. Time and resources should be provided for high school teachers and community college faculty to pursue scholarship and research and assist them in completing doctorates and other terminal degrees in their fields.
- **Advisory Committee Report – Disability Advisory Committee**

Ms. Angela Szczepanik-Sanchez, Chair of the Disability Advisory Committee reported that the Disability Advisory Committee (DAC) has been working on how the Strategic Plan with affordability and accessibility relates to disability service providers at Illinois colleges and universities. She stated the DAC is looking for clear pathways for students to get the kinds of support they need such as vocational rehabilitation services. Ms. Szczepanik-Sanchez noted students should be hearing about these services while in high school, but that is not always happening. Ms. Szczepanik-Sanchez reported that the DAC is examining the coordination of student transitions and evaluation practices. She stated that many students do not understand what their disability is or how that impacts their means for education in the career transition, so they are looking for more ways to create an inclusive and accessible campus. The DAC is also looking for more resources to support the unique circumstances at each campus. Counseling services provided on campus would be a valuable tool. Ms. Szczepanik-Sanchez also spoke about students who lose funding and how we can help so they can continue their education. The goal is to make the pathway to graduation as seamless as possible and help these students understand that path.

- **Advisory Committee Report – Student Advisory Committee**

Ms. Maria Cruz, IBHE Board Member and Representative of the Student Advisory Committee (SAC), reported on the student perspective. She stated the students have presented some ideas to ensure underserved students are accounted for and are supported by financial aid. They feel funding towards public education can help more students attend college. Ms. Cruz commented that we need to provide more information on financial aid and scholarships because so many students do not realize what is out there for them. Ms. Cruz stated that another problem for students is house and food security. She said students believe there should be more student services, resources, and counseling.

Dr. Delaney stated how confusing it can be for students in terms of services because it varies from institution to institution. She feels there should be more transparency so there is no confusion. Dr. Garrison emphasized that we need to help students see a clear pathway to college because unless they are eligible for a scholarship, they sometimes think the door is closed to them. Mr. Douglas added that colleges and universities need to work with high schools so we can help the student understand the process of applying, doing essays, and applying for financial aid or additional funding.

D. Public Comment

No one registered for public comment.

E. Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the Board, on motion of Dr. Andrea Evans second by Mr. Derek Douglas and by unanimous vote, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 4:10 p.m.

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