

APPROVED
JUNE 8, 2021

June 8, 2021

MINUTES – STRATEGIC PLAN BOARD MEETING
April 14, 2021

Submitted for: Action.

Summary: Minutes of the April 14, 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 April 2, 2021, and Executive Order 2021-06.

Action Requested: That the Illinois Board of Higher Education approve the minutes of the April 14, 2021, Strategic Plan Board meeting.

STATE OF ILLINOIS
BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION

MINUTES – STRATEGIC PLAN BOARD MEETING
April 14, 2021

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, the Illinois Governor’s Disaster Proclamation dated April 2, 2021, and Executive Order 2021-06.

The following Board members were present via video conference: John Atkinson, Chair, Maria Cruz, Jennifer Delaney, Derek Douglas, Andrea Evans, Teresa Garate, Jennifer Garrison, Veronica Gloria, Veronica Herrero, 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. Lisa Freeman, Northern 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. Jaimee Ray, 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**

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

Chair Atkinson opened the meeting by reflecting on the legacy context shaping our strategic planning process. He stated that since the inception of the IBHE in 1961 it has been charged with the statutory responsibility to coordinate higher education in Illinois and to do so through the development of a master plan. He reported that early in his tenure as Board Chair he asked former IBHE Executive Director Harry Berman to provide this Board with an historic look at previous Illinois higher education plans, which is available on the IBHE website.

Whereupon Board Member Mackenzi Matthews entered the meeting.

Chair Atkinson reported that Dr. Berman spoke about achievements from 1964 to 1971 which included the following: establishing a statewide system of community colleges; creating the University of Illinois Chicago Circle Campus and Southern Illinois University Edwardsville; transforming two Chicago Teachers Colleges into state universities—Chicago State University and Northeastern Illinois University; launching two new public universities—Governors State University and Sangamon State; expanding health education; and initiating the Monetary Award Program (MAP). Subsequent plans reorganized the higher education system by eliminating the Board of Governors and the Board of Regents and establishing institutional Board of Trustees. He reported that the 2008 higher education plan laid out a goal in concert with the Illinois P-20 Council that 60 percent of Illinoisans would have a postsecondary credential by 2025. These were just a few of the landmark developments that have helped shape our higher education landscape to this present day. The themes from earlier higher education plans resonate now in 2021 – the importance of higher education; the value of our public and private institutions; and the critical role higher education plays in both developing an educated populace, as well as professionals for needed fields such as teaching.

Chair Atkinson stated this Board began the strategic planning process with a look at previous plans and current conditions. Last August and September, the Board began looking at data about the outcomes of students in our system and who is not accessing higher education in Illinois. There are too many groups—African American, Latinx, low-income students, rural students, and others—who do not have equitable access to early college opportunities and institutions do not enroll or graduate them at the same rates as their White or non- low-income peers. Approximately 1.7 million Illinoisans with some college but no degree and African American and Latinx are disproportionately represented among them. He affirmed this Board’s commitment to continue to work with institutional leaders, faculty, staff, and all stakeholders to achieve equity in higher education access and attainment.

Chair Atkinson acknowledged and thanked the members of the Advisory Committee and its co-chairs, Senator Pat McGuire, President Zaldwaynaka Scott of Chicago State University, Chancellor Juan Salgado of City College of Chicago, and CEO of 1871 Betsy Ziegler. He also thanked the 200 participants who contributed to strategy development as part of design work groups.

B. Presentation and Discussion

Executive Director Ginger Ostro reviewed the statutory responsibility for the Strategic Plan. The IBHE is partnering with the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) and the Illinois Student Assistance Commission (ISAC) as well as the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) as it is important to have the entire higher education system working together. Ms. Ostro described the context for the Strategic Plan and reviewed the overall process for stakeholder engagement which included focus groups across the state and a public survey to nearly 10,000 stakeholders. In addition, public comments were invited throughout the process with numerous individuals and groups providing written submissions via the IBHE website. The final phase of engagement will be the posting of the Strategic Plan draft for public comment and Town Halls to receive feedback. Ms. Ostro stated that community engagement is part of the core work for the strategic planning process.

Ms. Ostro revisited the vision adopted by the Board. This vision is: Illinois has an equitable, accessible, innovative, nimble, and aligned higher education ecosystem that ensures individuals, families, and communities across the state can thrive. The vision is supported by the following core

principles: 1) students are our priority; 2) equity drives our system; 3) higher education is a public good that enriches life; 4) our diverse institutions work in concert; 5) higher education reinforces the P-20 education continuum; and 6) talent, research, and innovation drive our economy.

Executive Director Ostro highlighted the importance of data and data analysis in the strategic planning process. She provided a summary of the equity gaps analyses previously shared with the Board. Ms. Ostro shared that Illinois colleges lost over 85,000 low-income undergraduates between 2013 and 2019, which is a 30 percent decrease. She noted that institutions do better at retaining low-income transfer students. Ms. Ostro stated there is real value in thinking about how the Illinois system is starting students at community colleges and transferring to four-year institutions.

Executive Director Ostro provided an overview of the preliminary strategies developed by design work groups in relation to the three priority goals.

- Closing Equity Gaps – learning renewal as we move past the pandemic; strategic, early college coursework; make sure institutions are working on policies and practices to close equity gaps; attract and serve working adults; address student support and related practices; focus on equitable talent management to increase and retain faculty, staff, administrators, and trustees of color; continue developmental education reform; expand college access; and focus on transfer between community colleges and universities.
- Increasing Talent to Drive the Economy – align the state's economic development plan and higher education strategies while addressing historic and inequities; contemplate creating a business and employer advisory council that would partner with higher education to help develop the diverse pipeline and focus on the future of learning; develop strategies to help keep talent in Illinois to stop outmigration; and provide learners with supported on-ramps and off-ramps to employment and higher education.
- Educator Workforce (as one key component of Talent to Drive the Economy) – scale pathways so students transfer seamlessly from community colleges to universities; create personalized paths that can build on work experience; build a consortium of institutions to make educator preparation coursework available; and enhance access to educator preparation programs through technology. Executive Director Ostro informed the Board that there is a work group still developing strategies to address the early childhood workforce.
- Affordability – core principles to guide a higher education funding system that is adequate and equitable; invest in MAP; address holds on students accounts and holds on student transcripts; find creative options for building savings for families through Illinois' 529 savings plans; and look at ways to reduce institutional administrative costs through shared services and joint purchasing.

Ms. Ostro said the last item that needs to be considered as the strategic planning process moves forward is how we hold ourselves accountable to achieving it. She concluded her remarks by briefly reviewing the timeline and reminding everyone of the strategic planning page on the IBHE website. Board member discussion followed.

Mr. Eric Zarnikow and Dr. Kenneth Shaw discussed certificate holders and asked if “some college but no degree” numbers include people who have a certificate. Ms. Ostro stated they are

included; however, industry certificates are not. Dr. Brian Durham, Executive Director of the Illinois Community College Board, stated industry certificates are incredibly complex to track.

Mr. Pranav Kothari noted the advisory group is continuing to work on the strategies that have been identified and identify priorities. He reported they are also working on ways to put the plan together once it has been finalized. Ms. Ostro thanked other Board members who served on design work groups—Dr. Jennifer Delaney, Mr. Zarnikow, Dr. Andrea Evans, Mr. Pranav Kothari, and Ms. Veronica Herrero. She thanked all the Board members for their time on additional meetings for the Strategic Plan and their work and guidance throughout this process. Ms. Ostro also thanked ISAC commissioners and ICCB members who served on design working groups.

Ms. Veronica Gloria asked if there is any particular strategy or initiative that supports immigrant students and professionals. Ms. Ostro responded that the equity design work group broadened the definition of equity to include immigrants, undocumented students, justice impacted individuals, students leaving foster care, and students with disabilities.

Mr. Derek Douglas asked about students who have had experiences with the justice system and believes the Strategic Plan should include a solution for them to have educational opportunities. He would also like the Plan to have a little more about the role and responsibilities of the higher education system and the community engagement. Dr. Shaw agreed and feels it is important to interface with these students to get them engaged in higher education.

Dr. Delaney spoke about affordability and ways to make it friendly and accessible for individuals moving through the system. It should be seamless and helpful in addressing individual student needs. Dr. Jacobs is pleased the draft highlighted the number of students who were eligible for MAP in Fiscal Year 2020 but applied after the deadline. She feels this is important to work on as we think about equity.

Dr. Andrea Evans discussed the focus on the educator workforce and educator preparation, especially early childhood education. She questioned whether we need to look at other broader areas of workforce need in the field of education.

Dr. Delaney discussed accountability for the Strategic Plan. She stated we have some important goals about higher education, serving public purposes, and reducing equity gaps and we want to continue working on those big ideas and be accountable.

Ms. Gloria asked if there is any reference in the Plan for support systems for students, such as mental health, tutoring, mentoring, or students who are experiencing poverty and hunger. She asked about partnerships with IBHE and the Department of Public Health or the Department of Human Services. Ms. Gloria would like discussion on how universities can continue to partner with the nonprofits. Ms. Ostro stated there was conversation, but we can go back and look more specifically on partnerships and how to provide for the full array of wraparound services. Dr. Teresa Garate added that students are not always the best self-advocates and understanding all the supports that are there for them can be overwhelming. She added she is glad we are working with the P-20 Council to help the entire system. Ms. Veronica Herrero discussed the populations that have fallen through the cracks especially due to the pandemic. She noted the community colleges have seen the greatest decline. Chair Atkinson stated there has not been a specific announcement but there is some information about some federal aid coming to Illinois which will be a significant investment around resiliency and restoration in learning.

Dr. Jennifer Garrison talked about the educator workforce—Pre-K, K-12, community colleges, and our universities. She stated we have the opportunity now to put our students first and work together. Dr. Shaw stated the conversations and leadership for the strategic planning has been outstanding and the sincerity that the Board feels is great.

Chair Atkinson asked for a discussion around accountability. He stated we need to have outcomes and measure those outcomes. Chair Atkinson feels accountability happens when you have rewards or investments that are based upon successful outcomes but said there is accountability just in having this conversation. Over the last year and a half, the Board has been focused on equity and closing equity gaps. Chair Atkinson said the IBHE is reflecting what is happening in our system and with our students in terms of closing these gaps.

Mr. Kothari believes the first step is to look at the Board members and all the people who provided input into this plan. He stated there is a learning component to this as well. We should look at what is working and what is not and, if we are not making progress, use that opportunity to figure out what we do differently. He expressed the point that if we are true to the goals that we have set out for this plan, we need to make sure we know if we are making progress or not.

Mr. Zarnikow noted that we need to keep in mind how long some goals take when we think about accountability measures. For example, if we are trying to increase students with a four-year degree, that will take longer than one year. He stated there will be some measures that show progress sooner. Chair Atkinson added there are activity measures and outcome measures. The activity measures are things we can keep an eye on. Mr. Douglas believes a big part of accountability is transparency. He stated if you put the plan out there so people can see, then they hold you accountable for it.

Ms. Herrero commented we need to create a system that promotes continuous improvement. She stated we need to have a very explicit method of coming together and revisiting and talking about the progress or the Plan could sit on a shelf and be forgotten. There needs to be a balance between the individual plans of colleges and universities and the plan of the IBHE. She said it could be in phases, but we need to be clear about what our phases of progress and accountability are as it relates to the Strategic Plan. Dr. Garrison was thinking compliance versus continuous improvement, but compliance is not accountability. She agrees with Ms. Herrero's explanation of accountability. Chair Atkinson reported that the university presidents and chancellors are focused on this and are ready to engage in a positive way.

Mr. Zarnikow discussed how to hold our elected officials accountable. He stated there are a lot of good things in the Plan but most of it requires money. He said for this Plan to be successful there needs to be funding from the State. Chair Atkinson agreed but feels fortunate that we have a Governor and General Assembly that are interested and excited about investing in education. He stated by having this Plan and being transparent about where things are and advocating, we just need to push hard to make sure that we have the resources, and the policymakers are aware of this. Mr. Zarnikow stated the Plan is shaping up to be great. He said he and some of his board members have had roles on the advisory committee or design working groups and he knows ICCB and some of our Board members have as well.

Chair Atkinson recessed at approximately 3:45 p.m. for a technical issue. The meeting was reconvened at 3:55 p.m.

Chair Atkinson stated the entire strategic planning process has been very good, especially with the level of engagement across the different phases.

C. Public Comment

Julia Albarracin from Western Illinois University is concerned there might be several consequences to increasing early college courses as it challenges the important mission that universities have in preparing the citizens of the future. She stated it puts jobs for thousands of devoted academics at risk and indirectly contradicts recommendations by a recent report by the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) that liberal arts education is strongly positioned for success in the job market. She said the intellectual experience provided by academics helps students to experience research and learning in a unique way that cannot be replaced. She also stated, according to the AAC&U, employer views on what matters most found substantial support for the outcomes and experiences of a liberal education. She also spoke on her research about immigrant students and noted that guidance counselors often do not know about all of the policies and resources in Illinois that help immigrant students access higher education here. She encouraged colleges to include all this information in every presentation done at high school and college fairs.

April Janney, President and CEO, Illinois Action for Children, addressed the Board. Illinois Action for Children is an organization that has been working with children and families for more than 50 years and now partners with 36,000 childcare providers and educators. They support the community college baccalaureate as part of the strategic planning process. She feels this is an issue of racial, gender, and economic justice that has a direct impact on children's learning. They support the bachelor's degree at community colleges because they feel it will increase access to higher education for women and women of color, as well as address the teacher shortage in Illinois. She said the opportunity to complete a bachelor's at a community college would make it easier for them to advance their career while elevating the quality of early learning for children.

Toya Redmond is a former student at Truman College and a current owner of a home childcare center. She transferred to a four-year university to complete her bachelor's degree, but the transition was not as seamless as she feels it should have been. Ms. Redmond believes there should be a bachelor's degree at community colleges. She said it would be better for the student and make college access more affordable. She also spoke about college courses in high schools and thinks this is something that should be offered at all schools to help students be interested in early childhood education.

Joi Patterson from Governors State University (GSU) spoke about the early childhood teacher shortage which was confirmed by data provided to the public institutions. She feels if this would have been brought to their attention years ago, we would not be having this conversation today about community colleges offering baccalaureate degrees. She stated it is the position of GSU and many of the four-year institutions that the most expedient, efficient, and fiscally responsible path forward is to allow existing early childhood programs with the infrastructure and the capacity to meet this demand by working with community colleges and candidates through partnerships and articulation agreements. She stated they previously worked with Illinois Action for Children and had 20 to 30 teachers interested in a cohort program. Unfortunately, this past fall they had zero enroll due to changes at that organization, but they started the program with a small cohort. She stated to successfully eliminate barriers to attract, recruit, prepare, retain qualified early childhood teachers and to increase the capacity to scale out, they propose to continue with

the current plan of working with community colleges and IBHE. She believes to solve the problem, a professional development plan should be created, and we should create stipends that would allow early childhood teachers to leave their second jobs and have more time to take college classes.

Greg Montalvo from Western Illinois University (WIU) spoke about the education workforce. He shared information on how WIU has worked to meet the needs of education professionals with the western Illinois region, and they were the first to offer a true distance education program in the form of a founding professor who rode a horse to teach students in another location. Dr. Montalvo stated that the demand for early childhood professionals just came to them within the last year. He said WIU has started working to offer early childhood programs at their campus and the Quad Cities campus. He agrees with the previous comment provided by GSU that early childhood baccalaureate-level preparation should continue at a four-year institution.

Chair Atkinson commented we appreciate all of those who made the time and effort to share their perspectives with us today. He shared there will be additional opportunities to engage with us and the strategic planning process. He invited everyone to check our website for the posting of the draft of the Strategic Plan, Town Hall dates, and to provide written submissions.

D. Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the Board, on motion of Mr. Pranav Kothari second by Mr. Eric Zarnikow and by unanimous vote the meeting was adjourned at approximately 11:30 a.m.

Respectfully submitted by Tracy Rembusch, Secretary to the Board.