

March 12, 2004

STATE BOARD REJECTS ADDITIONAL STUDENT FEE INCREASES

FORMS COMMITTEE TO STUDY WRITING ASSESSMENT, ADOPTS TEMPORARY RULES ON ALTERNATIVE TEACHER CERTIFICATION

BOISE - The Idaho State Board of Education has denied University of Idaho, Idaho State University and Lewis-Clark State College's appeals for higher student fees.

The Board previously approved a 7.31 percent increase in student fees for ISU, and 8.5 percent increases for LCSC and U of I at its January Board meeting. ISU and U of I approached the Board for permission to present fee increases above 10 percent at the April Board meeting. Both requests failed on a 2 to 4 vote. LCSC asked the Board to reconsider its original fee increase proposal of 9.98 percent and the motion failed on a 3 to 3 vote. Boise State University, who received an 8.27 percent increase when the Board set student fees in January, and Eastern Idaho Technical College, who received a 5.98 percent increase also in January, did not approach the Board for additional fee increases.

"This is the hardest vote in my life," said Board member Milford Terrell concerning LCSC's proposal. "But I can't vote for increases for one university and not another."

"One of the most difficult decisions the Board has to make is whether or not to increase student fees," said State Board of Education President Blake Hall. "When the Board set fees in January we attempted to balance the needs of the institutions with the ability of students to pay for increased fees. I have difficulty in understanding the logic that if the state can't afford to allocate more funds because of economic conditions; why does someone assume that students aren't effected by the downturn in the economy and have the ability to absorb double digit increases?"

"The Board wants what's best for everybody -- students and the institutions. It's a very difficult decision. I'm supportive of institutions having the funds they need, but I'm also troubled by the thought of going through a second round of fee increases and asking students to bear the brunt of the increased costs faced by our institutions," said Board member Rod Lewis.

In other Board business, officials from the Idaho Legislature's Office of Performance Evaluations presented a report on school district administration and oversight. The report showed that administrator positions have doubled in the last four years in comparison to teachers based upon the OPE definition of administrators. The report also detailed deficiencies in district and Department of Education accountability and reporting. The Department of Education was asked to report at the June

State Board meeting on the issues raised in the OPE report and the Department's progress in implementing the report's suggestions.

The Board also formed a committee to evaluate the value of reinstating the statewide direct writing assessment in the 11th grade. The move was precipitated by a request to reestablish the assessment from the Idaho Council on English Teachers. Due to a 1996 Board rule, the assessment was removed as an 11th grade requirement and the test is only given to high school freshmen. The committee participants would include ninth and 11th grade English teachers and would evaluate the benefits and cost of giving the assessment in both grades.

The Board readopted temporary rules to reauthorize computer based alternative routes for teacher certification. Under the rules, the Board could approve alternative certification programs that offer the following standards: pre-assessment of teaching and content knowledge, provide an academic advisor, include exams of content knowledge and teaching techniques as well as provide mentoring programs. Applicants must possess a bachelor's degree or higher to participate in an alternate certification route. In November, the State Board approved the American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence (ABCTE) as an accepted certification program. ABCTE will continue to be an accepted Idaho program and under the temporary rule the Board would entertain additional alternative certification programs, particularly through Idaho's universities.

The need for alternative routes for teachers has a new sense of urgency because of the federal legislation, "No Child Left Behind," which will not allow the State Board to continue to grant waivers for uncertified teachers. Last year the State Board approved 313 waivers for districts to hire uncertified teachers because certified teachers were not available. "Rural school districts are looking for ways to fill teaching positions with qualified applicants. By providing an alternate route, individuals can bring their real life experience into the classroom," said President Hall.