



**SPECIAL BOARD MEETING  
June 29, 2020  
Office of the State Board of Education**

A special meeting of the Idaho State Board of Education was held via Zoom teleconference on Monday, June 29, 2020. Board President Debbie Critchfield presided and called the meeting to order at 3:00pm (MST). A roll call of members was taken.

**Present**

Debbie Critchfield, President  
Andy Scoggin\*, Vice President  
Kurt Liebich, Secretary  
Linda Clark

Emma Atchley  
Shawn Keough  
Dave Hill

**Absent**

Sherri Ybarra, State Superintendent

\*Except where noted

**Monday, June 29, 2020, 3:00 p.m. (MST)**

Prior to discussing the agenda items, Board President Critchfield explained that Board Member Clark would address the Instruction, Research, and Student Affairs (IRSA) items and Board Member Hill would address the Planning, Policy and Governmental Affairs (PPGA) items, since the items on the agenda were prepared prior to the new Board Committee Chairs being appointed. Moving forward, Board Member Liebich will serve as the IRSA Chair, Board Member Clark will serve as the PPGA Chair, and Board Member Hill will serve as the Business Affairs and Human Resources (BAHR) Chair.

**INSTRUCTION, RESEARCH AND STUDENT AFFAIRS**

1. Board Policy III.G. Postsecondary Program Approval and Discontinuance – Partial Waiver

**BOARD ACTION**

**M/S (Clark/Hill): I move to waive through June 30, 2021 the requirements in Board Policy III.G.3.c and III.G.4.b that institutions submit proposals for modifications to academic and career technical programs to the Board office for**

**approval for those modifications with a fiscal impact of less than \$250,000, and instead require that the institutions submit requests for approval for this type of modification to the Executive Director. Modifications that result in the expansion of existing program offerings outside of an institution's designated service region are not affected by this waiver.** A roll call vote was taken and the motion carried 6-0. Board Vice President Scoggin and Superintendent Ybarra were absent from voting.

Board Member Clark introduced the item and explained that it was brought before the Board during the Regular June 2020 Board Meeting, held on June 10, but no action was taken in order to revise the motion's verbiage prior to Board approval.

During the Board Meeting held on June 10, TJ Bliss, Chief Academic Officer, outlined that this item provides flexibility for institutions to modify programs by means of letters of notification rather than via full program proposals until June 30, 2021. Mr. Bliss stated that this flexibility will be important as institutions revise program delivery methods as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. He also added the revision allows for the Executive Director to request a full program proposal if necessary, and that any modifications to programs relating to an institution's statewide responsibility will still require a full program proposal.

There were no questions or comments from the Board.

## 2. Higher Education Research Council Appointment

### **BOARD ACTION**

**M/S (Clark/Atchley): I move to appoint Ms. Heather Messenger and Ms. Eileen Barber, and to re-appoint Ms. Robin Woods, as non-institutional representatives to the Higher Education Research Council, effective immediately and expiring June 30, 2023.** A roll call vote was taken and the motion carried 6-0. Board Vice President Scoggin and Superintendent Ybarra were absent from voting.

### **AND**

**M/S (Clark/Atchley): I move to appoint Dr. Marianne Walck to the Higher Education Research Council as the representative from the Idaho National Laboratory, effective immediately.** A roll call vote was taken and the motion carried 6-0. Board Vice President Scoggin and Superintendent Ybarra were absent from voting.

Board Member Clark introduced the item and shared that the Higher Education Research Council (HERC) provides guidance to Idaho's 4-year, public institutions of higher education with regards to research and the implementation of the Board's research policy. Board Member Clark stated that a list of HERC members is included in the agenda materials, noting that several of the individuals are members by virtue of their designated positions at the institutions. This motion approves the appointment of

individuals to fill the non-institutional and Idaho National Laboratory (INL) positions on the HERC.

Board President Critchfield stated that the Board addressed this item during this particular Special Board Meeting since there were two other items already on the agenda, and shared that this action will allow the HERC to remain fully staffed with no lapse in member terms.

There were no questions or comments from the Board.

## **PLANNING, POLICY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS**

### **3. Digital Campus Update**

This item was provided in the agenda materials as an information item.

Board President Critchfield introduced the item, and explained that Board Member Keough, a member of Governor Little’s Coronavirus Financial Advisory Committee (CFAC), presented the Board’s \$34 million funding request for blended learning initiatives and a proposed higher education “digital campus” during last week’s CFAC meeting. The CFAC unanimously supported the request and Governor Little signed the request shortly thereafter.

Board Member Hill provided background on the item, reiterating that \$4 million of the \$34 million CFAC request was designated for a “digital campus”. In light of the uncertainty stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic, the Board asked Gordon Jones, Dean of the College of Innovation and Design at Boise State University, to collaborate with Dr. TJ Bliss, Chief Academic Officer, and Jonathan Lashley, Associate Chief Academic Officer to consider a strategic approach to remote learning as well as the online delivery of courses and academic resources for higher education in Idaho. Additionally, Board Member Hill shared that Dr. Cynthia Pemberton, Lewis-Clark State University President, and her staff evaluated the current remote learning opportunities for Idaho’s higher education institutions.

Board Member Hill added that the purpose of this item is to discuss options without immediate obligation for the Board to approve the implementation of one of the proposed models.

Board Vice President Scoggin joined the meeting at 3:12pm.

Dr. Bliss shared a presentation outlining two prospective models developed by the work-group, prefacing the discussion by stating that the objective of the group was to explore the concept of a “digital campus” that would deliver a low-cost, high-quality, online educational experience to Idahoans, regardless of their location. The group agreed that proposed models for a “digital campus” would need to be viable, desirable,

and feasible, and eventually narrowed their focus to two proposed models: “New U” and “Idaho Online”.

Dr. Bliss discussed that “New U” would be an online-only, public postsecondary institution with an accessible, affordable, accountable student-centric approach. The “New U” would essentially be added as a ninth public institution of higher education in Idaho. Board Member Hill inquired if there are any comparable models, and Dr. Bliss responded that Western Governors University, a private, online university based out of Salt Lake City, Utah, follows a similar model. The concept of “New U” was drafted based on the ideal that a separate institution could potentially meet specific affordability, content, delivery, and credentialing needs that Idaho’s other institutions do not or are unable to meet. Dr. Bliss emphasized that “New U” would be independent of Idaho’s other institutions.

Dr. Bliss then discussed “Idaho Online”, which would utilize resources and curriculum developed by Idaho’s current institutions to create a federated course sharing marketplace and Adaptive Knowledge Enterprise. The key foundations of the “Idaho Online” model revolve around universal access, affordability, and value. Dr. Bliss compared the “Idaho Online” model to programs such as “Open SUNY”, “BYU Pathway Worldwide”, “UMass Online”, and “Unizin”. The concept of “Idaho Online” was drafted with the goal of new efficiencies for delivery emerging from fortifying and consolidating current online courses, faculty, resources, and support from Idaho’s higher education institutions.

Board Member Hill pointed out that “stackable” certificates were mentioned as part of the composition of both models, and voiced his support for certificates as they could possibly assist students who are place-bound or economically disadvantaged. He also mentioned a conversation with Clark Gilbert, former President of Brigham Young University (BYU)-Idaho and current President of “BYU Pathway Worldwide”, and asked Mr. Bliss to discuss the program. Dr. Bliss stated that “BYU Pathway Worldwide” is similar to the proposed “Idaho Online” model in that it is dependent on BYU-Idaho to provide the programming and course content.

Board Vice President Scoggin noted that the cost to develop a credit hour for “BYU Pathway Worldwide” is approximately \$44.00, with students paying \$75.00 per credit hour. He also discussed staffing, sharing that there are approximately 100 staff members and roughly 400 adjunct faculty members that deliver instruction. Board Vice President Scoggin added that the “BYU Pathway Worldwide” model is similar to the “New U” model with the component of the program’s dependence on BYU-Idaho to maintain accreditation.

Board President Critchfield discussed that Dr. Bliss’s presentation represents two months of collaboration with Mr. Jones and Dr. Lashley, and added that the group’s work had no pre-determined outcome, but rather the objective to build upon previous Board conversations regarding statewide needs for digital learning. She also reiterated

that this agenda item is conversational and informal, but said that the Board should be prepared to assist with development and make decisions regarding the proposed “digital campus”, particularly in terms of governance, in the coming weeks.

Board Member Atchley discussed that a “digital campus” was the primary recommendation of the Affordability and Accessibility Subcommittee of the past Higher Education Taskforce, and voiced her support for the idea. She inquired what would become of the online courses that are currently being taught at Idaho’s higher education institutions, and Board Member Hill stated that each institution would continue to deliver online and hybrid courses where they see fit, and the addition of a “digital campus” would provide supplemental education opportunities for students.

Board Member Atchley also inquired about the component of the “digital campus” models that would allow for “New U” or “Idaho Online” to request coursework from the institutions, and asked if the current institutions are able to request coursework from their peers. Dr. Bliss responded that this is a possibility, and provided the example of Harvard providing coursework to Boise State University through a specific accreditation process.

Board Member Keough discussed that her presentation to the CFAC outlined that the proposed “digital campus” would be centered on current institution offerings and resources, with new online access for students as a “one stop shop”. She voiced her concern that what was presented to the CFAC is different than what was presented by Dr. Bliss in terms of the “New U” model, and added that the timeframe is not appropriate to establish a new institution. Board Member Clark echoed these comments, and shared her concern about the optics of considering the addition of a new institution with the current shortage of financial resources; she also added that the establishment of a ninth institution does not lend itself to the ideal of “systemness” that the Board has encouraged among the current institutions.

Board President Critchfield addressed Board Member Keough’s concerns, and discussed that the Board’s Executive Committee decided that the system-wide approach presented in the “Idaho Online” model would be the most efficient and cost-effective to establish, and stated that she felt it would be helpful for Dr. Bliss to present both models to demonstrate that multiple options have been explored prior to the presentation. She added that the two models may not be mutually exclusive, and that the Board could possibly establish a hybrid model in the future.

Board Secretary Liebich voiced his support for the “Idaho Online” model as the most effective first step, and echoed Board President Critchfield’s comment that the Board could potentially implement elements of the “New U” model in the future. Board Member Hill agreed, and added that the Board should consider how a “digital campus” will benefit Idahoans who are place-bound or economically disadvantaged, and not just the role it will play in the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. He also added that the

implementation of one of the models would build upon the current online and hybrid offerings of the institutions.

President Pemberton asked the Board to consider a third option, which she stated would be very similar to the “Idaho Online” model. She shared that she has worked with Dr. Rick Aman, College of Eastern Idaho President, and the staff at CEI to evaluate the current online and hybrid course offerings for Idaho’s public higher education institutions. She shared that, within two months, they have been able to identify an inventory of the current online course offerings and available student resources. The third model would emphasize the current course offerings and resources and utilize supplemental funds to build out increased infrastructure and supports, create an online marketplace, and maintain the infrastructure in the future.

Board Vice President Scoggin inquired what the average cost per credit would be for the proposed third model. President Pemberton stated that that cost has not yet been established, and discussed that the current cost per credit at the various institutions could be utilized to establish this. Board Member Keough inquired how the concept of “stackable credits” could be incorporated into this model, and President Pemberton responded that that would be one of the items that would need to be discussed moving forward.

Amanda Logan, Executive Liaison at the College of Eastern Idaho, shared that President Aman strongly echoed President Pemberton’s comments.

Dean Fisher, College of Southern Idaho President, also echoed President Pemberton’s comments. President Fisher previously worked with “Open SUNY”, which closely mirrors the “Idaho Online” model, and discussed that the “Idaho Online” model has considerable viability.

Dr. Marlene Tromp, Boise State University President, referenced her previous experience at Arizona State University, which has a strong online program called “ASU Online”. She stated that “ASU Online” is part of ASU, rather than being separate, and added that its scale would be similar to the end result of collaboration among the institutions to establish the “Idaho Online” model.

Board Secretary Liebich inquired how the online marketplace is constructed and maintained, and how one of the proposed models would be implemented and maintained for Idaho. President Fisher discussed that the SUNY System Office maintains the online marketplace and the registrars at each of the institutions upload the data and course information on a regular basis. He added that an individual could utilize the system to search for a particular course, and the system would outline the available course offerings at each institutions, the individual’s compliance with course pre-requisites, and the necessary processes for the individual to register for that course. Dr. Bliss stated that there is an extensive quality assurance model within “Open SUNY” to prevent duplications and maintain accreditation for the courses that are offered. He



added that “Open SUNY” has its own staff that coordinates with the collaborating institutions.

Board President Critchfield reiterated that this is an information item, and stated that the consensus from the discussion would be to address questions and present a proposal to the Board within the next two weeks. Board Member Hill encouraged Board Members to contact Dr. Bliss with any follow up questions. Matt Freeman, Executive Director, added that the Board will need to move forward with a decision within the next two weeks in order to follow the timeline set for the CFAC funds, and in order to take the beginning of the fall semester into consideration.

Kevin Satterlee, Idaho State University President, discussed that the current institutions’ systems could support one of the new models, but the consensus is that the institutions would like to maintain a system-wide, collaborative approach rather than one institution taking on the responsibility.

There were no additional questions or comments from the Board.

There being no further business, a motion to adjourn was entertained.

## **BOARD ACTION**

**M/S (Hill/Scoggin): I move to adjourn the meeting at 4:27pm (MST).** The motion carried 7-0. Superintendent Ybarra was absent from voting.

*The State Board of Education will be conducting a virtual Special Board meeting on Mondays at 3:00 pm during the COVID-19 pandemic to receive updates on the status of public education in Idaho and to take action as necessary.*