



**SPECIAL BOARD MEETING
August 24, 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, August 24, 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
Dr. Linda Clark

Emma Atchley
Shawn Keough
Dr. Dave Hill
Sherri Ybarra, State Superintendent

Monday, August 24, 2020, 3:00 p.m. (MST)

INSTRUCTION, RESEARCH AND STUDENT AFFAIRS

1. Digital Campus Update

Board Secretary Liebich, IRSA Committee Chair, introduced the item and asked Board Member Hill, who has been heavily involved in this initiative, to provide details. The Board approved the initial implementation plan for a statewide digital campus, currently referred to as “Idaho Online”, during the July 9, 2020 Special Board Meeting and directed staff to access funds from the Governor’s Coronavirus Financial Advisory Committee (CFAC). Board Member Hill stated that this item is an informational update, and discussed that it is important to keep the Board informed and provide the opportunity for Board Members to offer feedback as the project moves forward.

Dr. TJ Bliss, Chief Academic Officer, shared that the steering committee for the digital campus initiative consists of Board Member Hill, Dr. Cynthia Pemberton (Lewis-Clark State College President), Dr. Rick Aman (College of Eastern Idaho President), Tony Roark (Boise State University Provost), Denise Aberle-Cannata (College of Western Idaho Provost), Dean Panttaja (Director of General Education at the University of Idaho), Wendi Secrist (Executive Director of the Idaho Workforce Development Council), Dr. Jonathan Lashley (Associate Chief Academic Officer), and himself.

Dr. Bliss shared that the steering committee is currently working with branding and marketing staff at the institutions to determine an official name for the digital campus, and will bring a proposed name before the Board for approval during a future meeting. The steering committee is also engaging in regular conversations with institutional leadership, faculty, staff, and students in order to identify course offerings, student support needs, and technological needs, as well as facilitating vendor demonstrations and soliciting and answering stakeholder questions.

Dr. Bliss also outlined the steering committee's defined implementation outcomes, for which they have set a deadline of December 31, 2020 to align with the deadline for the expenditure of CFAC funds, and an implementation roadmap, which can be found within the meeting agenda materials. The implementation outcomes are as follows:

1. Establish long-term governance structure
2. Establish a federated staffing model with our institutions
3. Develop a Next Generation Digital Learning Environment (NGDLE)
4. Launch online course sharing platform and catalog
5. Establish organizational infrastructure
6. Establish research and development plan
7. Launch professional development programs

At this time, the steering committee has received exemption from the Idaho State Division of Purchasing to procure NGDLE elements and has completed the State process for accessing CFAC funds.

Board Member Hill discussed that the digital campus will be geared toward access, affordability, and the recently unemployed, and added that one of the goals for the digital campus is to place emphasis on workforce development in addition to academic courses. He also discussed that it will be important to provide outreach and wrap-around services for students who wish to access the courses and materials.

Dr. Lashley discussed that the digital campus would align with the institutions' academic missions to create a course sharing virtual marketplace that would allow current students to take online courses from other institutions as they progress toward their degree. In addition, the digital campus would allow for alternative routes to certification and credentialing, and will aim to ensure that online learning opportunities are available to all Idahoans.

Board President Critchfield inquired as to what the first steps would be for a student interested in utilizing the digital campus. Dr. Lashley explained that, for students who are currently enrolled, the marketplace would be linked to their institution's web-based registration portal. For individuals who are not enrolled, it would provide an overview of available courses and credentials, and connect potential students with the proper resources. Board President Critchfield discussed that it will be important to create a simple user experience to simplify the process, in order to ensure that individuals are able to enroll independently without the assistance of a counselor or adviser.

Board Vice President Scoggin inquired if an individual would need to definitively enroll in one of the institutions to take advantage of the digital campus marketplace, and Dr. Lashley responded that it would depend on which degree or credential the individual is interested in. He provided the example of an accounting degree, and shared that the marketplace would give an overview of degree options and available course pathways before directing the individual to enroll accordingly. Dr. Lashley also mentioned, in relation to Board Member Hill's earlier comment, that there will need to be readily available wrap-around support for students, which should begin with the enrollment process.

Board Vice President Scoggin also inquired about the potential price point for courses, and Dr. Bliss discussed that the price per credit is one of the elements that the steering committee is still working to determine. The price per credit will depend on the institutions' current price points as well as the demand for certain programs. Dr. Lashley shared his hope that the marketplace will be live this fall to accommodate registration for Spring 2021 courses, and discussed that the course pricing would be one of the first items discussed by the steering committee over the next several weeks.

Board Vice President Scoggin inquired about which programs would be available first through the digital campus, and Board Member Hill explained that general education matriculation (GEM) courses would be the first courses available since they are commonly numbered and easily transferrable between the institutions. He discussed that full degrees that can be earned exclusively through the digital campus will be determined later, and Dr. Bliss stated that the digital campus will strategically expand over time. Kevin Satterlee, Idaho State University President, discussed that it may be valuable to include programs already offered by the institutions that are wholly online in order to demonstrate that individuals can pursue a degree exclusively through the digital campus. Dr. Bliss stated that the steering committee has already requested that the institutions provide a list of degree programs that they feel should be priority when creating the initial marketplace.

Board Member Clark discussed that individuals will have the opportunity to take a variety of courses from several different institutions, and that it will be important to have a process in place to eventually convert credits into a degree or credential. She also echoed Board Vice President Scoggin's question regarding price per credit, and referenced the initial idea that courses taken through the digital campus would be significantly less expensive than courses taken directly from the institution. Board Secretary Liebich discussed that the focus of access and affordability are a central part of the steering committee's weekly discussions, and Board Member Hill added that the steering committee will work to ensure that courses taken through the digital campus are as affordable as possible.

Dr. Cynthia Pemberton, Lewis-Clark State College President, discussed that LCSC conducted an analysis of the price per credit data for their courses. She stated that the analysis would need to be completed by each individual institution, since, because of many variables, the analysis is quite complex. The average price per credit for online

courses at LCSC is between \$207.00 - \$371.00, depending on the program and other pertinent variables.

Board Member Atchley shared her appreciation for the work that has been completed so far by the steering committee, and her hope that Pre-K – 12 will be able to offer courses through a similar platform in the future.

There were no additional questions or comments from the Board.

PLANNING, POLICY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

2. Fall Reopening Update

Board Member Clark, PPGA Committee Chair, introduced the item and discussed that the item serves as a continuation of the fall reopening update that the Board received during the previous week's Special Meeting on August 17, 2020.

General Update

Tracie Bent, Chief Planning and Policy Officer, shared that the "dashboard" spreadsheet, which is included within the meeting agenda materials, is being updated continually to include new information as it is received.

Board Secretary Liebich inquired if communication channels are in place in order to update the "dashboard" and disseminate new information as the situation continues to change and schools transition to reopening efforts. Ms. Bent discussed that the Board Office is collaborating to receive information from the districts and charters, and will likely make changes to that process moving forward in order to make it more efficient and accessible.

Public Charter Schools

Alan Reed, Chairman of the Idaho Public Charter School Commission, discussed that he is pleased with the charter schools' efforts and plans for fall reopening, and shared that several representatives of the IPCSC would provide updates.

Jenn Thompson, Director of the Idaho Public Charter School Commission, discussed that the IPCSC oversees 57 charter schools and has reviewed plans for each of those schools to ensure that there are no areas of concern. The IPCSC is communicating frequently with schools to assist with troubleshooting and problem solving as schools begin to open. Ms. Thompson shared her appreciation for the Board for providing guidance and boundaries via the Idaho Back to School Framework, which allows schools to make decisions based on the current situation as the local level.

Gayle O'Donahue, who oversees Victory, Liberty, and Legacy Charter Schools in Nampa, echoed Ms. Thompson's appreciation for the Board's decision to allow for local governance and flexibility. She stated that it is important for schools to create an environment for students that is safe and health-conscious, and discussed the safety

measures being employed by Victory, Liberty, and Legacy Charter Schools, including rigorous professional development for teachers and staff prior to reopening. All three schools are entering their third week of the school year, and none of the schools have had a student or staff member test positive at this time. Temperature checks are required for students and staff before entering the building, as well as several times throughout the day. Ms. O'Donahue also shared that bipolar ionization units have been installed in each school's HVAC systems to purify the air, and each school is able to order additional masks, hand sanitizer, and plexi-glass desk shields through the State.

Kathleen Allison, Executive Director of iSucceed Virtual High School, shared that the start of online schools across the state is varying greatly this year, and that online schools are experiencing an increase in enrollment due to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. In order to compensate for the increase in enrollment, virtual schools are hiring more teachers and staff, and Ms. Allison added that there is concern that the increase in enrollment will be temporary. Ms. Allison shared that iSucceed has also been affected by the device shortage, and is struggling to acquire more devices for its students.

Board Secretary Liebich noted that many virtual charter schools have enrollment caps as part of their charter, and as Ms. Allison to provide a sense of the overall need for a potential increase in capacity. Ms. Allison shared that it will be difficult to assess need until mid-September, once districts begin to reopen and parents decide whether or not to enroll their children in a virtual program.

Chairman Reed voiced his appreciation for the Board, and discussed that it may be helpful for charter schools to compile a database of reopening efforts that could serve as a resource for other charters and districts in Idaho as schools move into the fall semester.

Idaho Digital Learning Academy Capacity

Board Member Clark discussed that there has been concern among the regional superintendents regarding the capacity of the Idaho Digital Learning Academy, and shared that the Board has asked representatives of the IDLA to provide an update.

Cheryl Charlton (IDLA Superintendent), Jacob Smith (Director of Operations), and Will Goodman (Director of District Programs) provided an overview of the support available for districts as well as the challenges that the IDLA has addressed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Ms. Charlton discussed the progression of needs due to the changing landscape, particularly in the areas of professional development and training, content and courses, and extreme course enrollment, which has increased 400% over this week last year.

Mr. Goodman discussed several of IDLA's considerations for districts during a normal year as well as during the pandemic, outlining that IDLA offers multiple sessions (including early, late, custom, and flex sessions) to serve district needs. In order to

accomplish this, part-time teachers are teaching double the amount of classes they would normally teach, additional hiring windows have been added, and teachers are required to attend comprehensive training in online pedagogy. Mr. Goodman also discussed IDLA's registration process, outlining that school staff, called Site Coordinators, enroll students in IDLA courses; when a course is full, a new section is added and students are waitlisted while teachers are assigned to the new section, or until another student drops. He added that fall registration opened in April.

Mr. Smith and Mr. Goodman provided an overview of the ways in which IDLA has adapted to better support school districts during the COVID-19 pandemic, including the establishment of the "eDay" website, webinars and professional development at the district level, live support from IDLA, releasing course content, and the addition of K-6 English language arts and math courses. IDLA will provide a more in-depth update during their annual report on Wednesday, August 26, 2020 as part of the Regular August Board Meeting.

Ms. Charlton added that the current public health situation is unprecedented and that IDLA has focused on not jeopardizing the quality of experience for each student. Board Member Clark inquired if IDLA has concerns about meeting statewide student needs during the upcoming school year. Ms. Charlton stated that one of the main challenges IDLA has faced is a last-minute increase in enrollment paired with shortage of teachers, as well as a lack of time for newly hired teachers to train and onboard in the area of online pedagogy.

Board Member Keough inquired about student waiting lists and the turnaround time for teacher training. Mr. Goodman stated that the length of student waiting lists depends on the course and grade level. He discussed that IDLA's goal throughout the summer has been to interview teachers on Fridays and extend an offer of employment as soon as possible, and then use those newly hired teachers to staff new course sections for waitlisted students. Ms. Charlton discussed that the concept of IDLA was based on enhancing district offerings and meeting student needs, and that hiring new teachers to staff new course sections plays a key role in meeting those needs. She also reiterated that IDLA's main focus is to maintain the quality of courses while increasing capacity to meet the needs of students.

Board Secretary Liebich referenced the addition of K-6 English language arts and math courses, and asked if there is relevant data available. Mr. Goodman shared that there has been an increasing demand for K-6 courses as the summer has progressed, and added that IDLA is still working to hire teachers to meet student needs at that grade level. Board Secretary Liebich also inquired if there has been a trend with increased enrollment for districts who are opening remotely, and Mr. Goodman responded that areas where COVID-19 case numbers are higher are seeing a greater increase than areas where case numbers are low.

Board Member Clark inquired if data is available to reflect whether or not students enrolled in the K-6 English language arts and math courses are also enrolled in an elementary school program. Ms. Bent responded that students would be enrolling through their elementary school, not through IDLA direct enrollments. Mr. Smith confirmed that students are registered through their schools, not directly through IDLA. Ms. Charlton added that IDLA plans to expand their K-6 course offerings in the future.

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 (Keough/Hill): I move to adjourn the meeting at 4:29pm (MST). The motion carried 8-0.

The State Board of Education tentatively plans to convene weekly for a virtual Special Board Meeting during the COVID-19 pandemic to receive updates on the status of public education in Idaho and to take action as necessary.