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BOARD APPROVES POLICY MAKING SOME STUDENT FEES OPTIONAL

The Idaho State Board of Education today approved a new policy on student fees at Idaho's four-year public higher education institutions, making some student fees optional.

The revised policy, developed with representatives from each institution, creates four fee categories:

Student Enrollment, Engagement and Success; Institutional Operations, Services and Support; Student Health and Wellness; and Student Government. The opt-out option applies to a subset of fees under the Student Government category that support student activities, clubs and organizations.

The fee categories will be adopted by the four-year institutions. Students who decide to opt-out of subsidizing activities, clubs and organizations will receive a refund effective in the fall of 2022.

A report on development of the new policy was submitted late last year to the Legislature's Joint Finance Appropriations Committee in accordance with a requirement of House Bill 387 approved during the 2021 legislative session.

UPDATED POLICES ON ACADEMIC FREEDOM AND RESPONSIBILITY APPROVED

The Board also approved revisions to its Higher Education Policy III.B. - Academic Freedom and Responsibility and Policy III.P. – Students. The revisions bring the policy up-to-date with nationally accepted concepts of academic freedom and academic responsibility, and clearly spell out these freedoms and responsibilities for faculty, students and institutions. It is the first revision to the academic freedom policy, which previously only applied to faculty, since the 1980s.

Revisions were developed in consultation with faculty, student leaders, administrators and general counsel at all eight public institutions. The Faculty Senates of Boise State University, Idaho State University, University of Idaho and Lewis-Clark State College expressed their support for the revisions in a letter sent to the Board on February 14, 2022: “...the Faculty Senates of these bodies would like to express our strong support and appreciation for [these revisions.] The proposed policy offers clear standards affirming a sense of fairness and intellectual freedom in higher education in the state of Idaho...”

The revised policies will be added to the Board Policies page on the State Board of Education webpage in the coming days. In the meantime, the policies are available in the meeting materials for the February 17, 2022 regular Board meeting: <https://boardofed.idaho.gov/meetings/board/archive/2022/021722/06IRSA.pdf>

BOARD ACTIONS ON LEGISLATION

The State Board took formal action to support four legislative bills, a proposed bill, and it approved a Board-sponsored bill.

The Board voted to support:

- **HB 627** – Calculating public school funding on enrollment rather than attendance.
- **HB 656** – Providing career ladder placement for experienced educators who come from out of state based on equivalent experience to educators already teaching in Idaho.
- **HB 461** – Expanding eligibility of spouses and children of Idaho military members killed or permanently disabled during training exercises for the state’s Armed Services Public Safety Officer Scholarship.
- **SB 1290** – Creating an incentive program to provide funding to educators who agree to teach in rural or underserved schools to pay student loans or additional education expenses if they agree to stay at the schools for up to five years.

- **RS 29318** – Extending the definition of “school age” enabling parents and school officials to determine when a child is ready to attend kindergarten or the first grade. Currently, a child must be 5 years old on or before September 1 to enroll in a public school.

The Board approved a bill introduced on its behalf:

- **SB 1329** – Moving the Extended Employment Service program from the Idaho Division of Vocational Rehabilitation to the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare.

The Board also reaffirmed its support for literacy funding, which could include optional all-day kindergarten, summer reading programs, and efforts to address dyslexia but did not take a position related to legislative proposals.

STUDENT EXPERIENCE SURVEY DASHBOARD DEMONSTRATED

The Board also saw a demonstration of its new Postsecondary Student Experience Survey Dashboard, which illustrates results from the student survey conducted last fall at all eight public higher education institutions. More than 8,500 students participated.

“Board staff did an incredible job of putting this data in a format that is very transparent and open to the Board, to the institutions as they continue to work in this area, and to the public,” Board President Kurt Liebich said. “All businesses, or institutions have a culture. The data from this survey is an imperfect snapshot of the cultures on our campuses, but there are areas where we can improve.”

Board Member Dr. Linda Clark added, “The institutions are going to need an opportunity to take the initial data, synthesize it for their institution, and make a plan for how they are going address any issues.”

Major takeaways include:

- ***A supermajority of students*** across all institutions and all levels (undergraduate and graduate) report positive experiences on campus. They feel like they belong, that they are treated with respect and that they are valued. They feel safe to express their personal beliefs without negative consequences and never or rarely experience shaming or bullying when they shared their personal beliefs or views.

- ***A majority of students*** across all institutions and all levels (undergraduate and graduate) report never or rarely feeling pressure to accept or affirm beliefs they found offensive.
- ***A sizable minority of students*** across all institutions and all levels (undergraduate and graduate) indicate they at least occasionally have negative experiences. The share of students reporting negative experiences varies by demographic characteristics, mainly political view, gender and age (based on statistical modeling).

The Student Experience Survey is posted on the State Board of Education website:

<https://dashboard.boardofed.idaho.gov/StudentExperienceSurvey.html>

The dashboard enables users to explore results by various student demographics and by institution. A written report on the survey results is included on the dashboard.

Today's regular Board meeting was held at Boise State University.

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