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STATE BOARD MEMBERS WEIGH IN ON SCHOOL CHOICE

The president of the Idaho State Board of Education and a fellow Board member offered personal statements today about the issue of school choice being debated in the Idaho Legislature. The statements were made during the State Board’s regular meeting held at Boise State University.

While the full Board did not take a position on any current or possible future education savings accounts or voucher legislation, Board President Kurt Liebich noted Idaho’s existing public school choice options, including charter schools and magnet schools and identified criteria that would have to be met before he personally could support allocating public funding to private schools.

“First, we as a Board have a constitutional obligation to provide a uniform and thorough system of public education, so any expansion of school choice can’t take away from that obligation,” Liebich said. Second, he believes any new school choice program must have a means-test for recipients based on financial need. Third, “any new program can’t dilute precious resources from rural schools.” Finally, “it has to have some measure of accountability (for student achievement).

If we are going to allocate public money (to private schools) there has to be some level of accountability.”

Board Member Cindy Siddoway, who lives in Terreton, a rural community in eastern Idaho said, “I see this as a national movement. Out-of-state money, out-of-state groups, influencing decisions in Idaho. I think it is important we make an Idaho decision and, focus on the issues of accountability, and that we do no harm. Let’s make it an Idaho plan, not a national plan.”

Revised Strategic Plan Approved

The Idaho State Board of Education today approved changes to its K20 Education Strategic Plan including new metrics focused on the college and career readiness of graduating high school students, rather than the percentage of postsecondary degree and certificate attainment among Idaho’s 25-34 adult population, otherwise known as the 60% goal. That measure was removed by the Board last year.

“Moving away from population goals is not a change in our philosophy about what students need,” Board President Liebich said. “We’re going to measure how we get there in a different way rather than hold ourselves back with something we can’t control. We’re going to focus on real growth targets around certificate and degree production and hold ourselves accountable for that.”

Other Board actions during the two-day meeting include:

- Approved mid-point updates to the Board’s Graduate Medical Education (GME) Strategic Plan. Since it was adopted by the Board 2017, the 10-year GME plan has helped grow graduate medical education programs from 9 to 13 statewide. GME Coordinator Dr. Ted Epperly told Board members that he expects the number of programs to grow by an additional 8 to 11 programs over the next five years. Residents tend to stay and practice within a 100-mile radius of where they serve their medical residencies. There are currently 243 GME residents working in Idaho. Epperly expects those numbers to grow to 389 over the next five years.
- Approved a 5-year contract for Cody Hawkins, Idaho State University’s new head football coach. Hawkins will make \$210,000 in base salary annually.

The contract includes bonuses based on the number of victories and increases in attendance at home football games.

- Approved two-year contracts for Boise State University’s top assistant football coaches.
Defensive Coordinator Spencer Danielson will be paid \$875,000 and Offensive Coordinator Bush Hamden will make \$825,000 in base salaries over the two years. Both coaches are also eligible for bonuses based on victories and on the academic performance of their student athletes.
- Approved the University of Idaho’s request to rename its new Idaho Asia Institute the “Habib Idaho Asia Institute” after Dr. Phillip C. Habib, who graduated from the U of I in 1942. After serving in World War II, Dr. Habib began a distinguished 30 year career in the U.S. Foreign Service. In 1982, Dr. Habib was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom by President Ronald Reagan. Dr. Habib maintained a connection to the University of Idaho throughout his life. He passed away in 1992.

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