The December 8, 2010, Commission teleconference was called to order by Commission Chair Ann Chambers Noble.

Commissioners present: Chairman Ann Chambers Noble, Commissioners Larry Atwell, Charlene Bodine, Jack Russell, Steve Skordas and Wendy Sweeny. Special note: Commissioner Skordas was present for the meeting, but could not be heard. Following the meeting, he submitted in writing his contributions to the discussion. Commissioner Skordas’ comments are attached to these minutes.

Commission staff present: Executive Director Jim Rose, Deputy Director and Chief Financial Officer Matt Petry, Programs Team Manager Joe McCann, Financial Team Manager Larry Buchholtz and Commission Liaison Gail Anderson.

A roll call was taken. A quorum was present. Due notice had been published.

CONSIDERATION OF TUITION ADJUSTMENT

Motion: Commissioner Atwell moved and Commissioner Bodine seconded a motion to approve a $3.00 per credit hour increase in resident tuition with commensurate increases in other student residency classifications and to maintain the current tuition cap of twelve hours.

Discussion on $3.00 tuition increase: Commissioner Atwell said that given the economy a $3.00 increase in tuition would be appropriate. Jim Rose explained that Commission policy requires our tuition rate be compatible with surrounding comparator states at a rate of no more than 98 percent of average tuition and proportion of tuition to medium household income. He referenced a spreadsheet scenario for two other increments – one for a $4.00 increase and another for a $6.00 increase – and said that if the Commission were to approve either of those increments, its comparator position would be maintained. He added that at the $6.00 increment level, the percentage would be approximately 71 percent of comparator states’ numbers, and the increase for Wyoming students would be about 9 percent.

At Commissioner Russell’s request, Commissioner Atwell moved to amend his motion and Commissioner Bodine seconded the amendment to approve a $6.00 per credit hour increase in resident tuition with commensurate increases in other student residency classifications and to maintain the current tuition cap of twelve hours.

Commission Chair Ann Noble asked college presidents to weigh in on their position. Five colleges reported support of a $3.00 tuition increase, and two colleges supported a $6.00 increase.

Commissioner Bodine called for a vote on the amendment to the motion. The amendment failed.

Discussion on lifting the tuition cap of 12 credit hours: Commission Chair Noble asked for comments on lifting the tuition cap of 12 credit hours. President Nolte said he did not think there had been sufficient research on this issue to know what its impact would be on the colleges. He expressed concern that such a move would constitute a significant increase for those students taking more than 12 credit hours. President Young expressed concern that lifting the tuition cap would be a significant tuition jolt for students and would probably affect public perception.
Commission Chair Ann Noble called for the vote. The motion passed with a 3-2 vote. Commissioner Russell asked staff to look into this issue in depth, so that the Commission would have more information next year. Commissioner Sweeny said she appreciated the very productive dialogue, but has continuing concerns that the colleges continue to ask for additional resources and yet they are not willing to support raising the cap or significantly increasing tuition. She said that if the Commission continues to go to the governor and legislature on a regular basis for additional funds, the colleges should also be willing to do their part as well.

CONSIDERATION OF NEW PROGRAM REQUEST: NORTHWEST COLLEGE

1. Surveying Technician, Certificate (6 hours)
   This program is designed to prepare students to be employees for local engineering and surveying companies. Additionally, the field instructors in this program are practicing surveyors, so professional contact is made with potential employers. Projected enrollment for the program is 15, 15 and 15 students in the first, second and third year respectively.
   Motion: Commissioner Sweeny moved and Commissioner Russell seconded a motion to approve the Survey Technician Certificate as presented. Motion passed. Commissioner Russell referenced a report that Jim Rose had provided to Commissioners about student certificates, and noted that it is important to be cognizant about whether our certificates are designed to lead to an associates degree. He recommended that the Commission schedule another discussion on how it defines certificates and completers.

REQUEST FROM SENATOR ELI BEBOUT ON BEHALF OF CWC

Commission Chair Noble reported that Senator Eli Bebout has requested that the Commission provide a letter to the governor, governor-elect and Joint Appropriations Committee for $9,916,614 in state funding for the CWC Allied Health and Trades project. Jim Rose shared a memorandum from the Attorney General concerning statutory language on administrative responsibilities of the Commission for submitting requests for capital construction to the legislature. The Attorney General’s opinion is that the language of the statute is not permissive, and that writing a letter would not be advisable. Commissioner Sweeny said she had reviewed the statute and believed Senator Bebout’s request is beyond what the Commission can legally do. Commissioner Atwell said that he thought we were obligated to respond to the request, explaining that the project was previously approved by the Commission and the Legislature, but since that time the law has changed and we cannot make any recommendation at this time due to the change in the law.

Motion: Commissioner Atwell moved and Commissioner Russell seconded a motion that we respond to Senator Bebout’s request with copies to other representatives from that area who contacted us, explaining that we cannot make that kind of recommendation at this point in time and explaining what we have done in the past.

President McFarland said that a delay in knowing whether CWC will receive state funding will be costly. She reminded the group that just as the process for developing new criteria for approving capital construction requests is a lengthy process, so is the planning and construction process from the college’s standpoint. CWC has been in the approval process for several years, and has now passed a general obligation bond and secured local funding for $11.5 million. She reminded the Commissioners that they did not recommend capital construction projects in 2009 or 2010, and this will be the third year that no request is forwarded. She asked Commissioners to consider the special circumstances inherent in this request and the uniqueness of CWC’s situation.

Commissioner Bodine called for the vote. The motion passed.
DISCUSSION OF DATE FOR TELECONFERENCE MEETING TO CONSIDER REPORT

Commissioner Atwell asked whether the commission had an obligation to approve the report. Jim Rose explained that the Commission has basically employed the consultants to produce this work. They have agreed to present the report to the Commission if requested to do so, but there is no obligation on the Commission to approve the report or accept the recommendations contained in the report. It was agreed by consensus to distribute the report by mid-December to presidents, local superintendents and interested stakeholders for comment, and to schedule a Commission teleconference meeting on Wednesday, December 29, 2010, at 8:30 a.m.

Commission Chair Noble reminded Commissioners that an Executive Session is scheduled for February 1, 2011, at 3:00 p.m. The Executive Session will adjourn prior to the legislative reception.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Noble thanked everyone for participating in the meeting. There being no further business before the Commission, the meeting adjourned.

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