The December 6, 2011, Commission meeting was called to order by Commission Chair Wendy Sweeny at Little America, Cheyenne, Wyoming.

Commissioners present: Chairman Wendy Sweeny, Commissioners Larry Atwell, Charlene Bodine, Bruce Brown, Saundra Meyer and Jack Russell.

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

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

CONSIDERATION OF TUITION ADJUSTMENT

Commission Chair Wendy Sweeny welcomed visitors and called the meeting to order. She explained that the topic for this meeting is very limited. She asked each college to make a statement regarding their position on the proposed tuition adjustment of $4.00 per credit hour and modifying the 12-hour tuition cap. The colleges, in alphabetical order, commented as follows:

Casper College: Dr. Nolte said that the Board of Trustees had not taken a position on these two issues. As president of the college, he is not opposed to the tuition increase, but is opposed to modifying the tuition cap, because of the adverse effect it will have on students.

Central Wyoming College: JoAnn McFarland noted that the board of trustees for CWC has not taken a position. President McFarland said she favors the increase in tuition because Wyoming’s tuition—even with the increase—will still be lower than our surrounding states. Based upon the study conducted by Casper College students, President McFarland does not favor modifying the tuition cap. Trustee Frank Welty said he felt this is not an appropriate time to increase tuition because of the current economy.

Eastern Wyoming College: President Armstrong said the board of trustees has not taken formal action. His position is to increase the tuition by the $4.00. At EWC there are scholarships to assist students who would be negatively affected. While he is not in favor of removing the cap, he said that if the cap is removed, students should pay for each hour. To offset the impact on students, we might consider freezing tuition for a few years. President Armstrong said he felt this was an issue we should be putting into the hands of the Administrative Services Council. Trustee Sherri Lovercheck felt that we should not put more on the backs of our students. Twenty-four percent of EWC students take more than 12 credits, so modifying the cap would affect a large portion of the student body.
Laramie County Community College: Interim President LaRowe reported that the board of trustees has not taken a formal stance. Personally, he is opposed to both proposals. He recognized that if we fall on hard times, we would have to look at finding more revenue, but he does not believe that raising the tuition at this time is necessary.

Northern Wyoming Community College District: President Young said that the board of trustees has not considered this issue. He is opposed to making changes to the tuition cap, and opposed to increasing tuition with the caveat that we are grateful for the governor’s support and would not want to jeopardize that.

Northwest College: President Prestwich said that his board has not acted on the proposal. He is in favor of the increase in tuition, because he believes it is a modest increase over time. He does not support a change in the tuition cap, however, because it will be harmful to many programs. It may also decrease the rate of degree attainment. Trustee Gloria Hederman said that she has no opinion on the tuition increase but is opposed to a change in the cap. The cap allows students to explore different areas of study and finish their degree in a reasonable amount of time. Trustee Rick LaPlante said he was strongly opposed to raising tuition because we have not articulated why we need the money nor what we are going to do with it.

Western Wyoming Community College: President Leach said she is opposed to raising the tuition and strongly opposed to raising the cap. Trustee Jim Roth said the trustees are opposed to an increase in tuition because he does not believe that tuition for Wyoming should be driven by the other WICHE states. The board also opposes an increase in tuition cap, because many community college students come to the institution without scholarships and have to pay their own way.

Commission Chair Sweeny thanked the colleges for their comments and asked Commissioners to speak.

Commissioner Atwell said he is disappointed to think that every year the colleges come to the Commission for more money from the state, but they do not want to put their own money into it. He said he believes that the colleges offer a product that is worth the increase and more. He said that concern for the students who will be impacted is justified, but colleges will be able to do even more than they do now when they have additional funds. Commissioner Atwell said he is in favor of an increase in tuition and in favor of increasing the tuition cap.

Commissioner Bodine said she believes that all students should have a “skin in the game.” In light of the fact that the colleges need the money, then there should be an increase in tuition. She said she would also vote to increase the tuition because incremental increases are far better than a sizeable increase all at once. Regarding the tuition cap, she recommends leaving it at 12 credit hours.

Commissioner Brown said he worries about setting tuition at a level that is out of reach for students to be able to participate in the college system. Trusting that the system needs additional revenue, however, he agrees that we should raise tuition by the $4.00, and in the future would like additional information as to why we need the funds. He believes it is a good idea to leave the cap at the present level.

Commissioner Meyer said she supports the $4.00 increase because it will show the legislature that we are willing to do our part. She does not favor raising the cap at this time, and would like input from the Administrative Services Council when or if this issue is revisited in the future.

Commissioner Russell said that he does not believe our tuition is proportionately low when compared to other states, because the data do not include fees, and some of our colleges charge substantial fees in
addition to the per-credit tuition amount. Fees within our college system, he said, vary from almost nothing to over $2 million per year. He has also considered the fact that the governor raised the amount that the state will contribute and it seems necessary that students should participate in that increase. He supports the $4.00 increase with some sadness, because it will be hard for a certain group of students. Commissioner Russell said he will vote against any change in the cap.

Commission Chair Wendy Sweeny said there was the risk that if we undercharge for a product, the students will undervalue the product. She believes that if we raise the tuition, students will find the funds. Regarding the cap on tuition, she has no strong opinion either way. If a student pays for 12 credits, and takes 21 credits, what they receive is a bargain.

**Motion:** Commissioner Russell moved and Commissioner Atwell seconded a motion to approve a $4.00 per credit hour increase in resident tuition with commensurate increases in other student residency classifications. Motion passed.

**Motion:** Commissioner Bodine moved and Commissioner Atwell seconded a motion not to modify the 12-hour cap on tuition. Motion passed.

ADJOURNMENT

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

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Wendy Sweeny                Date                               Jim Rose                   Date
Commission Chair            Commission Executive Director