



WYOMING
COMMUNITY COLLEGE COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES

ACTION AND REPORT AGENDA ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION (ACTION ITEMS IN BOLD)

October 7

Commissioner Workshop

Northwest College

Yellowstone Building: Conference Center - Room #105 and #106

The public is asked to attend this meeting via the Zoom link at:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88152705994>

1:00 p.m. **CONVENE COMMISSIONER WORKSHOP**

A. Workshop Rollcall

Commissioners

Commissioner Boal- Present

Commissioner Blikre – Present

Commissioner and Vice Chair Dooley – Present

Commissioner Frederick – Present

Commissioner and Chair Freeze – Present

Commissioner Newman – Present

Commissioner Oakley – Present (Signed in later)

Ex Officio Members

Governor Gordon or Lachelle Brant – Not Present

Superintendent Balow or Shelley Hammel – Present (Shelley Hammel)

Community College Commission Executive Director, Dr. Sandy Caldwell – Present

Commission Staff

Dr. Ben Moritz – Present

Mr. Larry Buchholtz – Present

Ms. Paris Edeburn – Present

Mr. Rob Dennis – Present

A. Enrollment Trends

TAB B

Commissioner Freeze noted the three major topics on the agenda. Adding further that the enrollment trend really sets the stage for the discussion.

Dr. Caldwell noted that enrollment trends are related and included in the enrollment report, which is a standard consent agenda item. Enrollment does impact revenue and tuition action. The Enrollment report itself is routine however important to see the trends. She further noted that because of Covid-19, the Commission was unable to address enrollment at the June meeting. Dr. Moritz reviewed the enrollment report pulling out the salient points.

Enrollment has been stagnant or declining in headcount but FTE is increasing, noting that students are moving through efficiently. Thus saving students money and expediting their return to the workforce. This also demonstrates there are fewer students in the system. Wyoming's overall population trails the country. The population is aging and the minority population is growing. Significant skills gaps exist among working adults.

Dr. Moritz displayed a page out of the Enrollment Report, with a graph showing headcount changes over time. Community College enrollments tend to be counter cyclical with the economy. Covid-19 has created a different environment. The CARES funds and the adult grant were very effective in averting significant declines in enrollment, which is expected to bear out in enrollment numbers next year. He noted his desire to do a 10 year comparison but was unable to do so because of data incompatibility. Data systems were revised in 2012 providing for a more accurate count.

Wyoming's population growth up to 2015 outpaced the country. After 2020 minimal growth is anticipated, but nothing compared to the rest of the US. The next slide accounts for much of the growth to be expected across the state. Laramie County is expected to include the most of the growth with 15,000 new residents. Growth will occur in Natrona, Campbell, and Sheridan County. Pyramid graphs indicate the largest growth will be in Baby Boomers. He noted the lack of growth bands replacing Boomers. Millennials are leaving the state at higher percentages, potentially resulting in a fiscal issue for the state. By 2040 a large percentage of the population will be over the age of 70 requiring more resources, a smaller population to recruit to the colleges, and less revenue for the state.

Community colleges have relied heavily on the 18-24 year old demographic. Wyoming's community colleges are more comprehensive and thus rely on an older mix and demographic. Colleges need to reduce their reliance on traditional age students, focusing on adult students. The state has to focus currently on underserved adult workers. Dr. Moritz noted the number of high school graduates who matriculate as compared to the percent of adults in higher education with skills gaps. Adding, where we expand enrollment is important.

Dr. Moritz featured Park County and where we could use the total population increase and the percent increase population segments. He recognized increases could come not only from recruiting but also by increasing capacity. He suggested the need to be thinking about where we can place the students. Unimpeded growth has a downside. Adult students are more interested

in CTE programs and degree completion. If the Colleges were to expand the number of adult workers then there is a need to expand facilities.

The minority population is another growth area. These populations tend to be younger and have larger skills gaps and tend to not have sustainable income. The percentage of Hispanic students across the state compares to the overall state population. Black and African American enrollment is not as easily distributed. Even though it has grown the population percentage has not.

No further discussion on the topic ensued.

B. Tuition Discussion

TAB C

Dr. Caldwell introduced Mr. Buchholtz. She provided an updated memo from the Executive Council, noting the Executive Council has had three meetings on the topic of tuition. In 2018 the Commission adopted a framework policy clarifying percentages for tuition dependent upon state aid. If state aid remained constant, the colleges would be on the lower end of tuition. If state aid changed then the tuition rate would potentially change. The Executive Council did ask to maintain the rate and is committed to bring their recommendation back to the Commission in time to make a tuition determination. She noted Mr. Buchholtz prepared a considerable amount of information and that tuition is a part of the Sustainable Funding Workgroup discussion.

Mr. Buchholtz started, noting as part of tuition policy, there are requirements to make a recommendation of increasing or decreasing the tuition. He also noted his intent to provide a detail of the impact of enrollment on tuition since moving the enrollment cap from 12 to 15 credits. Prior to 2019, colleges charged for a cap at 12 credits. He questioned the impact of students who were enrolling in 15 credits to complete their degree in 2 years. Detailed is the actual enrollment by credit hour, across the past 4 academic years, noting the percentage change through 2019. Overall enrollment has gone down 10.57%. But enrollment in 30 credit hours is up 32%. Therefore, lifting the cap did not impact enrollment. Mr. Buchholtz suggested a possible action for complete removal of the credit cap.

Commissioner Frederick noted a more significant perceived drop over a 4 year timeline. Mr. Buchholtz added that the total enrollment decrease was 17.9%. There was some movement numbers as a result of COVID. Dr. Caldwell clarified that the increase in the cap did not negatively affect the enrollment.

Commissioner Blikre asked if we were to remove the cap completely, some students may take longer to finish their degree which could negatively impact the attainment timeline. Mr. Buchholtz added that he will show later the potential impact of tuition dollars from removing the cap. Removing the cap is anticipated to leave level the number of students who want to complete degrees in two years. It may reduce the number of students who are taking credits in less than 3 years.

Commissioner Freeze noted there too many variables to determine cause and effect, suggesting waiting on adjusting the cap until we have more information.

Dr. Caldwell added this as one of topics addressed in Executive Council. While there will be impacts there are many data points supporting lifting the cap. The Presidents are supportive of lifting the cap which would provide about \$1 million.

Commissioner Blikre commented that our main charge has been to keep education as nearly free as possible. Commissioner Fredrick added that having a cap would keep an incentive. Commissioner Boal asked why lifting the cap may result in lower enrollment.

Mr. Buchholtz clarified, he did not suggest it would lower enrollment, but it may lower the number of hours a student will enroll. Those who take more credits currently because it is free, may not take as many in the future. It may potentially change the number of students who may finish quicker than two years. Commissioner Frederick suggested that two years ago there was deep concern on the cap and its' impact on enrollment. After analysis the concern was not realized. Going from 12 to 15 credits did not affect enrollment very much.

Mr. Buchholtz continued showing comparative data about tuition policy from what was adopted in 2018. He noted a table showing tuition in 1991, to what it is now, and the US average at \$91. During a 30 year period, The Commission has raised tuition over 619%. Yet nationally, the Community Colleges remain behind in the amount tuition has been raised over that period.

Commissioner Blikre noted that we may actually be way ahead.

Dr. Schaffer offered a note regarding the cap, that they did extensive research over LCCC's history and found no correlation between the financial cap and getting students to enroll in an expeditious time frame.

Commissioner Frederick noted the importance of keeping in mind the total tuition and fees. We need to keep fees in mind, considering the total cost. Mr. Buchholtz did provide per credit hour mandatory fees at the community colleges and not UW. Fees at UW are approaching the same as per credit hour of community college tuition. Average fees for the community colleges are at \$46 per credit hour. Dr. Caldwell highlighted that Montana has funded a tuition offset through a fee increase. Commissioner Blikre noted that in a way, the colleges have done a similar thing with Hathaway.

Mr. Buchholtz continued reviewing the fee spreadsheet presenting the mandatory student fee analysis which range from \$38 to \$51. The bottom shows how the colleges are charging fees to their student population, on a per credit, or at the cap basis.

The next slide is the running total of what the commission has done over the past decade as per the fee amount per credit hour (instate, WUE, out of state).

The next slide is an analysis of the US, Wyoming and Higher Education price index over the past decade. This index provides an idea of how the index compares with trending inflation rates. He noted tuition has not been increased ever in line with the inflation index. Tuition has always been done as an incremental step that tries to keep pace with college needs of the colleges.

The next slide showcases the difference in 4 mill and 1 mill revenue collected by the colleges and then local revenue collected across the system and thus the third financial leg across the colleges.

The next slide shows what Wyoming has done to change tuition and fees over the past 5 years as compared to other states. WCCC has increased tuition and fees over 43% in the past five years. Tuition accounts for just 7 - 8% of this increase.

Dr. Caldwell added some context, one of the colleges was not charging any fees and then started during this period of time. Commissioner Blikre asked if there was correlation between fee increases with the residence halls. Mr. Buchholtz noted residence hall fees are completely separate.

Commissioner Blikre asked about removing tuition caps and if there was an analysis of other states where the colleges may have removed their caps? Dr. Caldwell noted there is a lot of evidence that a cap doesn't have an impact. Commissioner Blikre noted that there was an incentive to complete extra credits.

Commissioner Freeze suggested that during the Complete College movement there was an incentive to have the cap, but it may not have provided the benefits expected. They had hoped to encourage students to take more credit hours and complete degrees more quickly. She suggested that the Commission could prorate for part-time students. The rationale was to provide a motivator. Add in the whole dynamic of students taking courses during high school has an impact on the cap.

Commissioner Fredrick noted that there are few degrees which require 63 or less credit hours. Dr. Moritz noted that most of the colleges have a minimum 60 credit Associate degree requirement which includes students taking prerequisites. The average credit requirement is 64. Keeping as close to 60 is always a priority. Dr. Freeze clarified per Dr. Dale, that neither Nebraska nor Colorado have caps on their tuition.

Mr. Buchholtz presented a tuition calculator the Commissioners could use to determine the fit of numbers within the tuition policy. He clarified this is out of the normal tuition cycle policy as it is an odd year. To populate the model, certain data is needed, specifically the level of state aid and local revenue in the previous odd numbered year. Mr. Buchholtz refined the model with current data noting further the need for a collective decision on how we want to inform the policy. The model notes that an \$8 increase is in order to provide 25% of the overall funding. He also provided projections of needed tuition with the current level of state aid funding.

Commissioner Frederick noted to base the tuition on the total aid is as an inverse relation based on state aid. State aid is not truly a realistic number to base tuition. Mr. Buchholtz noted that Commissioner Frederick is correct. State aid has gone down by \$23 million. Replacing the revenue lost is a balancing of the framework. Dr. Caldwell noted this a correct perception when looked at as a linear approach. Depending on the amount of state aid provided, tuition can be balanced up or down.

Commissioner Freeze acknowledged the flaw in setting absolute percentages. She suggested the importance of setting a goal for these amounts. It is a conscience decision to set and stay within the percentages or not. Dr. Caldwell reminded all of the off cycle. The Executive Council did request keeping tuition at the same rate, but now have the reality of facing budget cuts.

Mr. Buchholtz noted the model points out in the blue line, that the WCCC tuition rate provides a comparison to UW. One scenario shows what would be required before any budget cuts were enacted on the Community Colleges adding that the colleges now have \$157 million in state aid instead of the original \$176 million. He recognized that the percentage has become an inverse relationship.

Adding that he can show potential revenue based on a certain rate increase and can include an in or out of district tuition rate. WCCC's rationale is to set the rate half way between WUE and in-district for an out-of-district rate. The differential tuition has also been a charge of the Sustainable Funding Workgroup.

Mr. Buchholtz also suggested calculations in two additional ways such as tuition that goes to any student out-of- district or any student from a taxing district gets the same rate. Commissioner Blikre noted that he is aware of a county which was contributing more than other counties. Commissioner Freeze added that this gets even more complicated as several counties provide direct funding through BOCES/BOCHES. Commissioner Frederick clearly indicated his opposition to the increase of tuition falling on the backs of students especially for students who may live out of district. Commissioner Freeze noted that is one area up for discussion. Also the people in the districts are asked to pay taxes regardless. There is no choice. Commissioner Frederick added that people paying the tax can opt to move into a different county so as not to pay the tax.

Commissioner Blikre suggested that there is a tremendous boom to a county with a community college. He confirmed the need for a whole new system of funding to support the colleges from the state. This is not fair to communities who have found ways to support their colleges from a county level. Commissioner Freeze suggested the need to look at revenue generated from tuition and how it might help fund the institution as well as how it should be done as a part time solution.

Mr. Buchholtz shared a spreadsheet including enrollment across the system. Any potential increase in revenue from enrollment is contingent on everything else remaining the same. The red line on the sheet shows how the calculation would be impacted by increasing revenue just from in-state enrollment. The sheet goes further to model a differential tuition rate (colleges

charge an in-district rate, all other students pay an out of district rate). The potential is the college system could generate a little over \$4 million dollars. The blue highlights payment of an in-district rate. The yellow shows a scenario where only the home county student pays rate.

Commissioner Blikre asked about concurrent enrollment for out of district students. He further noted the potential loss of students for out of district and the resulting revenue impact. Dr. Caldwell there might be a little more complexity with concurrent enrollment instead of dual enrollment.

Dr. Moritz clarified the PEOB report provides enrollment numbers and dual and concurrent enrollment as potentially an unfunded mandate. He also noted that BOCES and BOCHES pay for the cost of instruction yet is not equal in every district. Dual enrollment would have a larger impact than concurrent enrollment.

Mr. Buchholtz continued providing some additional numbers which demonstrated the potential revenue impacts after lifting the cap. Modeling can be completed using any needed dollar figures. Commissioner Frederick in doing a little math and assuming that no enrollment has changed, with a 25% increase, for every five students, one who would not even the schools would break even. Commissioner Freeze recognized another complicating factor would be students who remain in their own district instead of another district.

Commissioner Frederick recognized the possible creation of residency issues. He asked if rules that are applied for in-state and out-of-state are also applied for in-county and out-of-county. Dr. Moritz noted frequently the same rules applied for in and out-of-state are also applied for in county and out-of-county.

a. President's Memo Regarding Tuition

[TAB C1](#)

Dr. Caldwell noted her desire to share a tuition memo from the Presidents. There was not a general consensus on setting tuition outside of raising the cap. The Executive Council is very aware that right now tuition is below the tuition policy even with the cap. Some of the colleges modeled their budgets on a slight tuition increase and are aware of COVID 19 impacts on families. She noted this is a painful time for students. The Council did reflect on differential tuition especially concerning the proximity of separate districts resulting in no concrete consensus. Until there is some direction or resolution for direction from sustainable funding, the funding gap will remain large.

Dr. Tribley suggested he was inspired by the conversation. Yet someone else controls the tools. Before the colleges receive the controls, all they can do is pass along the cost to students and the Presidents don't take this lightly. He noted seeing a large number of statistics, all while the colleges are trying to reimagine Wyoming in a time of COVID. He applauded his colleagues with the activity undertaken and clarified his strong opposition for an out-of-district tuition option for a variety of options.

Dr. Tyndall reflected that unfortunately all are in a difficult financial situation and an additional 10% cut is inevitable. Seeing this as an impact on students as a last resort. He suggested the need to meet again to discuss tuition. Sharing his perspective coming from Missouri where there was differential tuition and budget cuts just seemed easy and normal. Yet as a small college, CWC is in a bad spot. Numerous cuts have been squeezed out including cutting good programs. Dr. Tyndall is more in favor of differential tuition.

Dr. Dale spoke to the issue of differential tuition as very difficult situation because of the related moving parts included in the three legged stool. Like her other colleagues, she approached the profession believing in full access, but then all are hit with the reality of limited budgets. She noted from a business perspective, the need to increase tuition to survive at this time. Differential tuition may help in the short term, yet there is no long term solution. Dr. Dale is concerned about logistics and opportunity costs (staffing, etc.) involved in the decision and questioned if it was really helping.

Dr. Schaffer sought to point out three things. He is a fan of peer comparisons, all are experiencing increasing costs of higher education and per student costs. Another issue is timing. An October conversation is not ideal. Further conversations are needed prior to putting the issue on the backs of students to pick up additional cost. He also suggested the need to focus on student demographics, understanding the impacts of price, and recognizing the system has yet to establish a comprehensive financial aid program. He clarified he is really struggling with the discussion and support. He can bring a more formal LCCC position tomorrow.

Dr. Hicswa noted that the President's views cover a range of outcomes. Each college is in a financial situation such that they are eliminating programs and services. A tuition increase would mitigate some of their cuts. However, students are impacted the most as are those in need of specific services. She suggested if something is not done to help the colleges, all will continue to struggle. She noted the importance of what may happen during the upcoming legislative session.

Dr. Caldwell recognized that Dr. Travers had a family emergency and is not able to provide comments. She also recognized Dr. Divine as being part of the conversation but unable to attend the meeting. Dr. Caldwell further added she had asked WICHE regarding the Cap and that they had found need-based aid as having a larger impact overall than a tuition cap.

Commissioner Blikre asked if there was any other agreement from all the presidents besides eliminating the cap? Dr. Hicswa noted that there was not agreement. The Presidents were able to come to consensus on cap removal. She also added that the Presidents would be more agreeable to adjusting tuition until waiting to after the legislative session comes into view.

Commissioner Freeze suggested all review the provided materials, the President's memo, and play with Larry's spreadsheet. She also encouraged all to seek a balance between protecting revenue and impacting students the least.

Dr. Caldwell noted that if the Commissioners opted to defer to not take action at that point, the Commission may choose to take special action and hold a special meeting in April for the purposes of a tuition decision.

Commissioner Frederick recognized that the Executive Council does not recommend a differential rate as per service areas. He asked if revenue numbers were run and if the number was differential number. Mr. Buchholtz responded that numbers were run early within the Sustainable Funding Workgroup to consider and include a three rate schedule (in-district, out-of-district, Albany County). The impact to revenue is small and the cost to implement would be very cumbersome. The revenue generated is not enough to offset the cost. Commissioner Frederick had initially read the descriptions as tuition charges were dependent on in- or out-of-district service areas. He recognized his misinterpretation, but realized it could be a different point to consider.

Commissioner Blikre, based on his Legislative experience, would suggest his certainty to make some kind of a tuition adjustment, done within proper Commission guidelines. Commissioner Boal noted that we could make an adjustment but add some form of a statement. Commissioner Freeze recognized the need to do something to show that the colleges are attempting to help themselves.

Mr. Buchholtz added that the colleges can only address the budget cuts right now and the colleges took a \$23 million cut in a biennial hit. Potential loss to local revenue is yet to be seen. The prediction is somber. Local assessors make projections for local revenue and a decrease in local revenue is anticipated. Local revenue is currently up 5% over the previous year. He noted it is a 2 year lag before we see decrease in local revenue.

Commissioner Freeze suggested concluding the discussion and reiterated an out-of-district tuition would be a temporary fix until a more permanent solution is found.

C. New Strategic Plan Overview

[\(Presentation\)](#)

[TAB D](#)

Mr. Dennis introduced the new strategic plan. He reflected that detailing the plan seemed rather anti-climactic and that the plan is ready for perfection. He noted he would walk all through the statewide initiatives underway, the statutes which require a strategic plan, clarified objectives and goals, received feedback, and preparation for final adoption.

He showed a slide identifying the various statutes affiliated with the strategic plan, the priorities, performance measures, and provide the general direction. Mr. Dennis also reviewed the overall timeline for plan development. He noted the commonalities of the proposed plan with strategic plans at the colleges and the Educational Attainment Executive Council. He also reviewed the sharing of subsequent drafts over the year. Dr. Caldwell added that in addition to soliciting public comment, the plan was also sent to the Educational Attainment Council, the workforce development council, State Board of Education and more. Some positive comments were received. Four common themes emerged including Educational Attainment, Funding

Sustainability, Program Alignment, and Economic Development. All in line with the Community College system mission. The latest update is the plan had been reviewed by all Commission Councils including the Executive Council and the next step is to determine metrics.

Mr. Dennis reviewed each of the four goals, starting with Goal #1 Educational attainment which focused on Facilitating postsecondary educational attainment of the betterment of all Wyoming citizens. Commissioner Blickre asked how much gain there has been in the past year towards those between 25-64 obtaining a postsecondary degree or certificate? Further asking if gains are possible considering all that has happened. Dr. Caldwell added that these goals were set by the Educational Attainment Council and that more work is needed. Commissioner Blikre also noted this was a charge given to us by the Legislature with no funding to make it happen. Dr. Caldwell added that we had a series of recommendations and some things which have helped, such as the receipt of a grant to implement the Student Transfer Success initiative. Wyoming Works, CARES funding for adult workers, and the College Grant were all noted as a positive effort to support this goal.

Commissioner Freeze reflected if the Commission was doing enough to encourage attainment for the adult population or if additional objectives are needed. Dr. Caldwell reminded there are objectives under the third goal which also support educational attainment.

Mr. Dennis reviewed Goal #2 – Affordability. Specifically to facilitate community college system sustainability, funding, and affordability while keeping higher education as nearly free as possible. He then reviewed the four related objectives. Commissioner Boal asked about supporting or encouraging a sustainable funding source. It was noted that the sustainability was expressly pointed out in the. Dr. Tyndall suggested the need to find long term fiscal solutions. It was glaring already. Further noting the need for better language and also to recognize the governance issue. Dr. Caldwell indicated the development of an additional bullet.

Goal three included Program Alignment defined as facilitating alignment of post-secondary programs with UW, workplace, and workforce providing a seamless pathway for Wyoming citizens to their future endeavors and to the benefit of the state. Mr. Dennis read through the three associated objectives. Commissioner Freeze asked about minimizing unneeded redundancy, while being careful about wording. Something needs to be mentioned. Commissioner Blikre added that some think each college should specialize in something, yet that is not the purpose of the community college. Commissioner Frederick noted that in previous discussions of charging out-of-district tuition and then one district has a single program obligating students to pay out-of-district tuition. Commissioner Blikre suggested to try and eliminate redundancy at each institution. He added he is really afraid of those who are not aware students are either site bound or there is an extensive need. Dr. Caldwell suggested she could pull some language out of the state needs portion of the workgroup and also integrate some language around the distinction of local needs, and replication compared to duplication. Commissioner Blikre commented that we should add the phrase, “To be offered in the community where needed” to the first bullet, thus focusing on the community college purpose and bringing the program to the students, where they are. Mr. Dennis suggested infusing the word community into the first objective. Also suggested

were adding local, regional, and statewide. Dr. Caldwell suggested also adding language around replication and duplication.

Goal four, Economic Development included facilitating initiatives leading to the diversification and growth of Wyoming's economy. There were three objectives associated with this goal.

Mr. Dennis noted that some adjustments will be made. Dr. Caldwell suggested the discussion was very helpful. Commissioner Blikre suggested adding the full name of the College Presidents Executive Council to clarify. Commissioner Freeze asked about subsequent related action items, and if it was being developed by Commission staff. Dr. Caldwell noted yes, and it was also referred to by Mr. Dennis when he discussed metrics. Commissioner Freeze suggested that an action item would be sufficient under a couple of the objectives to clarify. Dr. Caldwell added that the intent was to keep this at a high level. How the plan would be monitored, measured, and implemented would come at a later time. That discussion would be considered at the February meeting.

Meeting adjourned.