

## MINUTES

# MISSISSIPPI POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE BOARD



IHL Executive Offices, Room 218  
3825 Ridgewood Road, Jackson, MS 39211

January 23, 2024, at 9:00 a.m.

Teleconference: 1-888-822-7517, Access code: 2791682#

Zoom: <https://itsmsgov.zoom.us/j/88917398676?pwd=twE5ryByqA638nh5ss85LM7dyafPiI.1>

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**BE IT REMEMBERED**, that the Mississippi Postsecondary Education Financial Assistance Board held a regular meeting on Tuesday, January 23, 2024 at 9:00 a.m. Members of the Board participated in the meeting remotely via Zoom or teleconference. Members of the media and public were invited to attend the meeting in Room 218 of the Education and Research Center, 3825 Ridgewood Road, Jackson, Mississippi, 39211.

The following member(s) participated remotely:

- Ben Burnett, MAICU institutional appointee
- Barney Daly, Lt. Governor's appointee
- Jason Dean, MAICU association appointee
- Mark Keenum, IHL institutional appointee
- Jim Turcotte, Governor's appointee and Chairman
- Dianne Watson, MCCB Board appointee

The following member(s) did not participate:

- Steven Cunningham, IHL Board appointee
- Tyrone Jackson, MCCB institutional appointee

The following Advisory Board member participated remotely:

- Senator Nicole Boyd, Universities and Colleges Committee Chair

Also in attendance either in person or remotely were:

- Jennifer Rogers, Director of Student Financial Aid and Postsecondary Board Director
- Meg Harris, Assistant Director of Operations, Student Financial Aid
- Shirley Mitchell, Program Administrator, Student Financial Aid
- Adele Russell, Student Service Representative, Student Financial Aid
- Frances West, Program Administrator, Student Financial Aid

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- Melissa Temple, Director of Nursing, IHL
- Terry Bland, Postsecondary Board Advisory Committee, Itawamba Community College
- Laura Diven-Brown, Postsecondary Board Advisory Committee, University of Mississippi
- Nicole Patrick, Postsecondary Board Advisory Committee, Mississippi University for Women
- David Williamson, Postsecondary Board Advisory Committee, University of Southern Mississippi
- Heather Dearman, President of MASFAA, Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College
- Toren Ballard, Director of K-12 Policy, Mississippi First
- Molly Minta, Mississippi Today

The meeting was called to order at 9:00 a.m. by Chairman Turcotte.

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On motion by Barney Daly and seconded by Ben Burnett, all Board Members legally present and participating voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the board meeting held on September 18, 2023, as originally drafted.

## **ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION**

**Item 1:** Jennifer Rogers presented a request to approve the 2023 Annual Report of the State-Supported Student Financial Aid Programs for submission to the Mississippi Legislature as required by law. Rogers presented a summary of highlights from the report. On motion by Mark Keenum, seconded by Barney Daly, all Board Members legally present and participating voted unanimously to approve the request.

### **1. Review and Approve the 2023 Annual Report of the State-Supported Student Financial Aid Programs for Submission to the Mississippi Legislature**

#### Summary:

The 2023 Annual Report is submitted under separate cover as Exhibit 1. A Summary of highlights will be distributed with the report as Exhibit 2.

#### Request:

The Office requests approval to submit the 2023 Annual Report of State-Supported Student Financial Aid Programs to the Legislature.

**Item 2:** Jennifer Rogers presented a request to extend the deadline for submission of the 24-25 FAFSA for HELP applicants. On motion by Ben Burnett, seconded by Barney Daly, all Board Members legally present and participating voted unanimously to approve the request.

### **2. Request to Extend the Deadline for Submission of the 24-25 FAFSA**

#### Summary:

The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) typically opens on October 1 each year, which is the same date that Mississippi opens the Mississippi Aid Application (MAAPP). Due to

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extensive changes to the online form, the system that supports the form, the Pell-eligibility formulas, etc. the 24-25 FAFSA was delayed in opening. Technically, it opened by December 31, 2023, as promised, but the form was not open for long hours in the early days. While the form is mostly open now, students are still experiencing an array of completion issues. The FAFSA form is required as a supporting document for the HELP Grant. In a typical year, the form must be submitted by April 30, following the MAAPP deadline of March 31.

### Request:

SFA requests approval of a temporary rule to extend the deadline for submission of the 24-25 FAFSA form from April 30 to June 30 due to the late release of the FAFSA.

Title 10: Education Institutions and Agencies

Part 615: Higher Education Legislative Plan for Needy Students Grant (HELP) Rules and Regulations

*Rule 1.1 Higher Education Legislative Plan for Needy Students Grant (HELP) Rules and Regulations.*

## II. APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

### A. First-time applicants must:

3. Fully complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) by the document deadline of April 30. The FAFSA completion and submission deadline is temporarily extended through June 30, 2024, for the 24-25 FAFSA only.

### B. Renewal Applicants Must:

2. Fully complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) annually by the document deadline of April 30. The FAFSA completion and submission deadline is temporarily extended through June 30, 2024, for the 24-25 FAFSA only.

### Recommendation:

Board staff recommends approval of this item, contingent upon completion of the Administrative Procedures Act process.

**Item 3:** Jennifer Rogers presented a request for the Board to approve a Flexwork policy for Mississippi Office of Student Financial Aid. On motion by Barney Daly, seconded by Mark Keenum, all Board Members legally present and participating voted unanimously to approve the request.

## 3. Consideration of Flexwork Policy

### Summary:

At the onset of the Pandemic, the Mississippi Office of Student Financial Aid transitioned from working full-time in the Office to working full-time from home over the course of two weeks. Except for checking the physical mail, SFA can accomplish 100% of its work remotely. Each staff member has a laptop computer with Avaya software that allows call center calls to be routed through the computers. Calls are not forwarded from desktop phones. Each staff member logs into the VPN and then passes through another firewall to access their remote desktop. Productivity and employee morale were high during the 15 months of remote work during the Pandemic.

### Request:

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SFA requests approval of the following Flexwork policy to allow the Office to create flexible work arrangements that ensure the Office is adequately open and staffed during all normal operating hours but also provide employees flexibility.

### **Part 601: Authority and Responsibilities**

#### **Chapter 4: Office of Student Financial Aid**

*Rule 4.5 Flexwork Policy for the Office of Student Financial Aid.* The Mississippi Office of Student Financial Aid supports flexible work arrangements that achieve a reliable and productive work environment for the employee, the Office, and its constituency. The Office will alternate employees working on-site and remotely to ensure that the needs of constituents can be always met appropriately. The availability of flexible work options may change as work processes evolve.

- I. Overview: The purpose of this policy is to define the different types of flexwork arrangements and provide considerations for employees considering Flexwork.
- II. Definitions:
  - A. Flexwork: Any working arrangement that varies from the standard work schedule (8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.) of the employee or the standard worksite (3825 Ridgewood Road, Jackson, MS, 39211) of the employee.
  - B. Flextime: An alternate work schedule in which the start time and end time of an employee's workday are varied or the days of the week an employee works are varied. Flexible work schedules may be adopted for short or long periods of time by the department and employee to accommodate needs. No additional approval is required for flextime arrangements.
  - C. Flexible Work Location: Any alternative work location, which may be the employee's home, or any other approved location.
  - D. Telework: A work arrangement in which an employee works part of the standard workweek at a Flexible Work Location and part of the workweek onsite.
- III. Employee Eligibility: Flexwork arrangements may be appropriate for some employees but may not be applied universally to any given job title or position. Flexwork arrangements may vary in times of day and/or location. Outside standard flexwork arrangements, occasional, ad-hoc Telework may be approved in response to unexpected and/or infrequent employee situations.
- IV. Equipment and Supplies: The following guidelines will cover all employees with flexwork arrangements:
  - A. The department will provide the necessary computer hardware equipment and software that is needed for the employee to perform their job duties at the Flexible Work Location. This may include computers, monitors, and other necessary IT equipment.
  - B. The employee must provide Internet service and telephone service (if necessary) to allow the employee to adequately work from a Flexible Work Location.

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- V. Employee Responsibilities:
  - A. An employee with a flexwork arrangement must be available by phone, email, and other means of communication as required by the supervisor.
  - B. The employee's duties, responsibilities, and conditions of employment remain the same as if the employee were working at the primary workplace. The employee will continue to comply with all state laws, policies, and regulations while working at the Flexible Work Location.
  - C. Flexwork arrangements are not a substitute for employee leave. Employees must continue to use medical leave and personal leave according to policy.
  - D. Flexwork arrangements are not intended as a substitute for childcare, elder care, etc. Employees must be able to fully concentrate on their work assignments during work hours.
- VI. Director Responsibility: The Director must ensure that the Office is adequately staffed and physically open during normal operating hours.

**Recommendation:**

Board staff recommends approval of this item. While numbered for inclusion in the Mississippi Office of Student Financial Aid *Policies and Procedures Manual*, the office policy does not require approval through the Administrative Procedures Act process.

**Item 4:** Jennifer Rogers presented an update on the 2024 Legislative Session. The Board did not take any action related to support of legislation. Rogers will keep the Board updated on continuing conversations.

**4. Update on 2024 Legislative Session**

### **ADDITIONAL AGENDA ITEMS IF NECESSARY**

The Board did not consider any additional agenda items.

### **EXECUTIVE SESSION IF DETERMINED NECESSARY**

The Board closed the meeting to consider the need to enter Executive Session.

On motion by Barney Daly, seconded by Jason Dean, all Board Members legally present and participating voted unanimously to enter Executive Session to discuss a personnel matter related to the Mississippi Office of Student Financial Aid.

The Board discussed a personnel matter related to the Mississippi Office of Student Financial Aid.

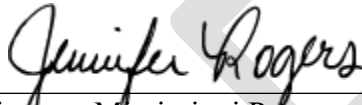
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On motion by Barney Daly, seconded by Dianne Watson, all Board Members legally present and participating voted unanimously to combine two positions in the Mississippi Office of Student Financial Aid, give an existing staff member a raise for assuming additional duties as a result of the combined positions, and adjust the operating budget accordingly.

On motion by Jason Dean, seconded by Mark Keenum, all Board Members legally present and participating voted unanimously to close the Executive Session and return to the Open Meeting.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business to come before the Board, on motion by Mark Keenum, seconded by Dianne Watson, all Board Members legally present and participating voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting.



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Director, Mississippi Postsecondary Education Financial  
Assistance Board