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MISSISSIPPI POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE BOARD



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BE IT REMEMBERED, that the Mississippi Postsecondary Education Financial Assistance Board held its regular quarterly meeting on Monday, September 25, 2017 at 10:00 a.m. Members of the media and public were invited to attend the meeting in Room 432 of the Education and Research Center, 3825 Ridgewood Road, Jackson, Mississippi, 39211.

The following members participated:

- Ben Burnett, MAICU appointee
- Lee Bush, MCCB appointee
- Jim Gibson, MCCB Institutional appointee
- Mack Grubbs, Lt. Governor's appointee
- Sharon Ross, Governor's appointee
- Jim Turcotte, Governor's appointee and Chairman

The following members participated via teleconference:

- Cynthia Melvin, MAICU appointee
- Al Rankins, IHL Institutional appointee
- C.D. Smith, IHL Board appointee

Also in attendance were:

- Kim Gallaspy, IHL Director of Legislative Services
- Stephanie Ganuchau, Special Assistant Attorney General, Office of the Attorney General, Universities and Colleges Division
- Meg Harris, Assistant Director of Operations, Student Financial Aid
- Audra Kimble, Mississippi Community College Board, via teleconference
- Jennifer Rogers, Director of Student Financial Aid and Postsecondary Director
- Apryll Washington, Assistant Director of Policy and Planning, Student Financial Aid

The meeting was called to order at 10:04 a.m. by Dr. Jim Turcotte, Chairman.

INTRODUCTIONS

All meeting participants and guests introduced themselves.

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On motion by Mr. Bush, seconded by Dr. Burnett, all Board Members legally present and participating voted unanimously to approve the Minutes of the teleconference meeting held on June 19, 2017.

REGULAR AGENDA ITEMS

On motion by Dr. Burnett, seconded by Mr. Grubbs, all Board Members legally present and participating voted unanimously to approve Regular Agenda Item #1. During discussion of request 1.a., Ms. Rogers described the Nissan Scholarship Program. During discussion of request 1.b., Ms. Rogers noted that MTLR is an effective program that is also easy to administer. She shared an email from the director of personnel in the Greenwood Public School District that expressed difficulty in hiring qualified teachers. Dr. Burnett shared that only 700 teacher licenses were granted in the most recent year compared to 7,000 ten years ago. The state is facing a severe teacher shortage.

1. Approve Legislative Requests for 2018 Legislative Session

The Mississippi Office of Student Financial Aid seeks approval to submit two requests for General Legislation for sponsorship and consideration during the 2018 Legislative Session.

- a. **Reference Title:** Nissan Scholarship (NISS); authorize Postsecondary Board to promulgate Rules and Regulations

Purpose:

To authorize the Board to promulgate rules for the Nissan Scholarship.

Reason for Request:

In 2014, the Legislature consolidated code sections dealing with state-based student financial aid into Section 37-106 of the Miss. Code of 1972. By doing so, the Legislature placed all programs under the authority of the Mississippi Postsecondary Education Financial Assistance Board. The Nissan Scholarship Program (NISS) was not included in the consolidation. To complete the consolidation of legislation and ensure all state-based student financial aid programs are authorized by the same oversight body, the Postsecondary Board should be granted authority to promulgate Rules and Regulations for the Nissan Scholarship program.

Suggested Legislation:

§ 37-106-3. Declaration of purpose

(1) The Legislature hereby finds and declares that:

...

(e) When appropriate, the Board shall administer grant and scholarship programs funded through alternate or private sources, such as the Nissan Scholarship program.

Fiscal Note:

The changes would not carry any additional cost.

Legislator Involvement/Interest:

Chairman Nolan Mettetal, House of Representatives Universities and Colleges Committee
Chairman Josh Harkins, Senate Universities and Colleges Committee

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Subject Matter Experts:

State Director of Student Financial Aid; Postsecondary Board members; financial aid administrators

- b. **Reference Title:** Mississippi Teacher Loan Repayment Program; integrate with William Winter Teacher Forgivable Loan Program

Purpose:

To remove the authorizing code for the Mississippi Teacher Loan Repayment Program from the authorizing code for the Teacher Education Scholars Alternate Route Certification Forgivable Loan program (TESA) and insert it into the authorizing code section for the William Winter Teacher Forgivable Loan Program to ensure MTLR is funded annually in the same manner as William Winter.

Reason for Request:

In 2014, the Legislature discontinued the Critical Needs Teacher Forgivable Loan Program, authorized in Section 37-106-55. The Mississippi Teacher Loan Repayment program (MTLR) was originally authorized as part of the Critical Needs program. The Legislature recognized the value of MTLR and did not wish to discontinue it, so the MTLR authorizing language was inserted into the code section for the Teacher Education Scholars Alternate Route Certification Forgivable Loan program (TESA) in Section 37-106-79. The Critical Needs program did not require specific annual appropriation by the Legislature, but TESA does. TESA has never been funded, so MTLR has not been funded. Moving MTLR from the code section authorizing TESA to the code section authorizing the William Winter Teacher Forgivable Loan program would ensure that MTLR is funded when all other forgivable loans are funded. Human resource managers in critical shortage districts have expressed the importance of MTLR in recruiting new teachers into districts with critical shortages.

Suggested Legislation:

§ 37-106-57. William F. Winter Teacher Forgivable Loan Program

...

(7) Awards granted under the William F. Winter Teacher Forgivable Loan Program shall be made available to nontraditional licensed teachers showing a documented need for student loan repayment and employed in those school districts designated by the State Board of Education as a geographical area of the state or in a subject area of the curriculum in which there is a critical shortage of teachers. Repayment and conversion terms shall be the same as outlined in Section 37-106-53 except that the maximum annual amount of this repayment should not exceed Three Thousand Dollars (\$ 3,000.00) and the maximum time period for repayment shall be no more than four (4) years.

(7-8) Failure to repay any loan and interest that becomes due shall be cause for the revocation of a person's teaching license by the State Department of Education.

(8-9) The board shall promulgate regulations necessary for the proper administration of this section.

§ 37-106-79. Teacher Education Alternate Route Certification Scholars Program

...

~~(5) Awards granted under the Teacher Education Alternate Route Certification Scholars Program shall be made available to nontraditional licensed teachers showing a documented need for student loan repayment and employed in those school districts designated by the State Board of Education as a geographical area of the state or in a subject area of the curriculum in which there is a critical shortage of teachers. Repayment and conversion terms shall be the same as outlined in Section 37-106-53 except that the maximum annual amount of this repayment should not exceed Three Thousand Dollars (\$ 3,000.00) and the maximum time period for repayment shall be no more than four (4) years.~~

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(6) The provisions of this section shall be subject to appropriation by the Legislature.

Fiscal Note:

The changes would not carry any additional cost.

Legislator Involvement/Interest:

Chairman Nolan Mettetal, House of Representatives Universities and Colleges Committee

Chairman Josh Harkins, Senate Universities and Colleges Committee

Vice-Chairman Briggs Hopson, Senate Appropriations Committee

Vice-Chairman Jim Beckett, House of Representatives Appropriations Committee

Subject Matter Experts:

State Director of Student Financial Aid; Postsecondary Board members; human resource managers in K-12 school districts

On motion by Mr. Gibson, seconded by Mr. Bush, all Board Members legally present and participating voted unanimously to approve Regular Agenda Item #2 as amended. Upon the suggestion by Ms. Ganucheau, the words “taken prior to being awarded HELP funds” was added to the end of the second sentence of the section.

2. Approve Updates to APA Part 615 – Higher Education Legislative Plan for Needy Students (HELP) Rules and Regulations, Chapter 1, Rule 1.1, Section II.A.2.c).

The Mississippi Office of Student Financial Aid seeks approval of updates to the Rules and Regulations for the Higher Education Legislative Plan (HELP) Grant. The change is requested to allow first-time applicants additional time to take the ACT and submit a qualifying ACT score. Previously, qualifying ACT scores must be received by April 30. The updated language will require students to take and submit any ACT score by April 30, but will allow students to submit qualifying scores at any time prior to entering college.

II. APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

A. First-time applicants must:

2. Submit by the document deadline of April 30:

- c) Proof of ~~a composite score on completion of~~ the national American College Test (ACT). The applicant must earn a composite score of at least twenty (20) on the ACT from a national test taken prior to being awarded HELP funds. A combined score of 950 on the Old SAT Critical Reading and Math sections, a combined score of 1410 on the Old SAT Critical Reading and Math plus Writing sections, or a score of 1020 on the New SAT will be accepted in lieu of the ACT.

The Board previously approved APA Part 615 in April 2017.

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On motion by Mr. Grubbs, seconded by Mr. Bush, all Board Members legally present and participating voted unanimously to approve Regular Agenda Item #3. Dr. Turcotte questioned the cost and long-term benefits of the agreement and raised concerns about data security. Ms. Rogers noted that there is no cost and NSPARC adheres to the highest level of data security. Most other state agencies, including MDE, IHL, and MCCB, already participate as data partners in Lifetracks. SFA and the Board will benefit from additional information about long-term program and participant performance.

3. Approve MOU with MSU/NSPARC

The Mississippi Office of Student Financial Aid (SFA) seeks approval to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Mississippi State University (MSU) on behalf of its National Strategic Planning and Research Center (NSPARC).

NSPARC has invited the Mississippi Office of Student Financial Aid (SFA) to become a Lifetracks data partner. Lifetracks is the state longitudinal data system. As a data partner, SFA will contribute student record level data derived through the administration of state-supported student financial aid programs at regular intervals. In exchange, NSPARC will evaluate and analyze the data, address research questions, and inform funding and policy decisions related to state aid.

The parties to the MOU are SFA, IHL, and MSU. However, the Mississippi Community College Board (MCCB) and the Postsecondary Board, are also asked to give approval, as evidenced by the signatures of the MCCB Executive Director and Postsecondary Board Chair.

Exhibit 1: Memorandum of Understanding (Page 12)

INFORMATION ITEMS

The Board received an update on the status of the online application for student financial aid.

4. Online Application Rewrite

The existing online application for student financial aid was developed by the Mississippi Department of Information Technology Services (ITS) in 2003. ITS has continued to host and manage the java application in the intervening years. SFA learned in July that ITS will no longer be able to support the existing application after June 2018 (possibly earlier). SFA contacted the Mississippi State University Research and Curriculum Unit (RCU), but the RCU indicated they could not undertake a project of such magnitude. At the recommendation of ITS, SFA entered negotiations with Mississippi Interactive (MSI), which already operates under an e-government contract with the state.

MSI submitted a project plan, provided under separate cover as Exhibit 3, that estimates the project will cost \$350,000 to develop and an annual maintenance fee of \$70,000 per year for each year after development.

SFA has also had preliminary conversations with Mississippi State University's National Strategic Planning and Research Center (NSPARC). NSPARC has not yet provided a project plan.

SFA intends to spread the initial development cost between FY 2018 and FY 2019. The unanticipated cost in the current year will likely require changes to the FY 2018 Award/Operating Budget and may result in the need for SFA to request a deficit appropriation of spending authority.

SFA will request approval of budget changes later in the fiscal year; however, anticipated changes are projected in Exhibit 2.

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Exhibit 2 – FY 2018 Annual Operating Budget (Page 15)

Exhibit 3 – Mississippi Interactive Project Proposal (Submitted under Separate Cover)

The Board received an update on the student financial aid redesign project.

5. Update on Student Financial Aid Redesign Project

The Student Financial Aid Redesign Project is currently on hold. Once the MOU with NSPARC is executed to make SFA a Lifetracks data partner, SFA will submit data files derived through the administration of state-supported student financial aid programs.

NSPARC will design a study to address the questions. The Lifetracks board must approve the study design before work can commence. Study results will not be available until December at the earliest.

Because study results will not be available in time to review and make recommendations for the 2018 Legislative Session, work on the Student Financial Aid Redesign Project is expected to continue throughout the 2018 calendar year. The project team will work to prepare recommendations for the 2019 Legislative Session.

The Woodward-Hines Education Foundation (WHEF) has expressed interest in participating in the Redesign Project. WHEF has offered to provide financial support for a facilitator to assist the task force in reviewing the study results and formulating recommendations.

The Board received an update on the FAFSA Completion Project and College Countdown.

6. Update on FAFSA Completion Project and College Countdown

The FAFSA is the Free Application for Federal Student Aid. FAFSA completion is highly correlated to college enrollment. Studies in low-income high schools in Florida and Chicago found that for every 10% increase in FAFSA completion, high schools saw a corresponding 5-7% increase in college-going.

In 2014, the U.S. Department of Education launched the FAFSA Completion Project and invited all states and high schools nationwide to participate. The Department gave states the authority to release student record level FAFSA completion data directly to high school counselors.

Last summer, the National College Access Network (NCAN) invited 120 cities nationwide to apply for \$55,000 grants to improve FAFSA completion rates. Jackson was the only city in Mississippi eligible to apply. The Get2College Program of the Woodward-Hines Education Foundation (WHEF) applied for the grant on behalf of the Jackson Public School District and was awarded one of only 22 grants nationwide.

Over the past year, SFA partnered with WHEF to improve FAFSA Completion Rates not only in Jackson as a partner in the grant, but also statewide. Our role in the effort was to provide student record level FAFSA completion data. SFA offers high school counselors a secure web portal to download FAFSA Completion Status reports. The FAFSA Completion Status Report lists every student from each high school who has submitted a FAFSA, tells when it was submitted, whether it was complete or incomplete, and whether the FAFSA has been flagged for verification. The reports are updated daily, so counselors can download reports frequently to monitor student progress.

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As of September 15, 2017, 72.1% of all public high school graduating seniors completed a FAFSA, an increase of 12 percentage points over 2016. The FAFSA completion rate of Jackson Public Schools graduating seniors was 76.9%, an increase of 19% over 2016.

At the NCAN conference last week, WHEF was among five of the original grantees to win an additional \$25,000. The prize was awarded for WHEF's successful partnerships with higher education institutions and SFA.

FAFSA Completion efforts will continue as part of College Countdown Mississippi, a collaborative initiative supported by MDE, IHL, MCCB, SFA, and Get 2 College. College Countdown is a three-part initiative to encourage high schools to participate in Application Days, FAFSA Days, and Signing Days.

ADDITIONAL AGENDA ITEMS IF NECESSARY

The Board did not consider any additional agenda items.

OTHER BUSINESS/ANNOUNCEMENTS

Dr. Turcotte proposed that the Board members experience the application process. Ms. Ross requested to see the entire application and award process.

EXECUTIVE SESSION IF DETERMINED NECESSARY

On motion by Mr. Grubbs, seconded by Ms. Ross, all Board members legally present and participating voted unanimously to close the meeting to determine whether or not it should declare an Executive Session. On motion by Dr. Burnett, seconded by Mr. Gibson, all Board members legally present and participating voted unanimously to go into Executive Session for the reason reported to the public and stated in these minutes, as follows:

Discussion of a student financial aid application and appeal.

During Executive Session, the following matters were discussed and voted upon:

Upon request by an applicant's parent, the Board reviewed the Director's decision, which had been upheld by the Appeals Committee, to deny the awarding of the Mississippi Resident Tuition Assistance Grant (MTAG). Initially, the applicant was denied MTAG because the applicant did not enroll in and earn 15 credit hours each term to establish continuous full-time enrollment. The applicant submitted an appeal that the requirement be waived due to a learning disability. The appeal guidance posted on the SFA website at www.mississippi.edu/take15 states, "Historically, appeals have not been granted for students with certain learning disabilities. However, if a student submits an appeal for such a reason and provides compelling documentation from a physician, the appeal will be considered." The documentation submitted by the student adequately documented the diagnosis of the learning disability as well as the classroom and testing accommodations granted by the student's previous high school and community college. The

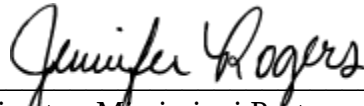
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documentation did not address the student's need to take a reduced course load. The Appeals Committee requested in writing that the student submit additional documentation from a physician referencing the applicant's inability to earn and complete 15 hours due to the disability. The parent indicated that the documentation provided was adequate and asked for the matter to be reviewed by the Board. On motion by Mr. Bush, seconded by Mr. Grubbs, all Board members legally present and participating voted unanimously to uphold the Director's decision and that of the Appeals Committee to deny the awarding of MTAG to the applicant until or unless the applicant provides documentation from a physician indicating the student is unable to enroll in and earn 15 credit hours each term.

On motion by Dr. Burnett, seconded by Mr. Gibson, all Board members legally present and participating voted unanimously to return to Open Session.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Board, Dr. Turcotte declared the meeting adjourned.



Director, Mississippi Postsecondary Education Financial
Assistance Board