

MINUTES  
**SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

- DATE:** Tuesday, February 27, 2024
- TIME:** 3:00 P.M.
- PLACE:** Room WW55
- MEMBERS PRESENT:** Chairman Lent, Vice Chairman Toews, Senators Den Hartog, Nichols, Carlson (Forsmann), Herndon, Lenney, Ward-Engelking, and Semmelroth
- ABSENT/ EXCUSED:** None
- NOTE:** The sign-in sheet, testimonies, and other related materials will be retained with the minutes in the committee's office until the end of the session and will then be located on file with the minutes in the Legislative Services Library.
- CONVENED:** **Chairman Lent** called the meeting of the Senate Education Committee (Committee) to order at 3:05 p.m.
- PRESENTATION: Lewis-Clark State College Update. Dr. Cynthia Pemberton**, President, Lewis-Clark State College (LCSC), provided an update on the college (Attachment 1). She said that LCSC was the only college in Idaho where students had a small college experience but did not pay elite private college prices. She shared that LCSC was proud of its affordability with the lowest tuition among Idaho's four-year institutions. LCSC offered 130 programs from GED to graduate certificates which served over 8,000 learners. **Dr. Pemberton** stated that LCSC was proud to help veterans, parents, working adults, and first-generation college students graduate at a pace that worked for them. She emphasized LCSC's stable enrollment and rising retention rate. She highlighted LCSC's nursing program and other healthcare related programs currently available to students and more healthcare programs that were in development.
- PRESENTATION: University of Idaho Update. C. Scott Green**, President, University of Idaho (U of I), offered an update about the university (Attachment 2). He highlighted how U of I met the needs of Idaho citizens through its statewide network of teaching, research, and extension programs. He shared about the university's financial solvency. In 2020, the university faced a budget deficit, but turned it around and achieved a budget surplus for the last three years. In addition, the university raised \$131 million for student scholarships. **Mr. Green** stated that U of I's enrollment increased and that 60% of the Class of 2023 were first generation college students. He shared about the university's numerous and various research projects in areas such as agriculture, potatoes, dairy, and the intersection of wildlife and ranches. **Mr. Green** encouraged investment in healthcare and cybersecurity related programs.
- PRESENTATION: Idaho State University Update. Dr. Robert Wagner**, President, Idaho State University (ISU), gave an update about the university (Attachment 3). He stated that ISU served over 12,000 students and enjoyed three consecutive years of enrollment growth. In addition, he shared that ISU had a record student retention rate. **Dr. Wagner** credited ISU's increased retention rate to a new and innovative student orientation experience and its proactive student advising program. He stated that affordability was a high priority for ISU, and that the university was dedicated to reducing financial barriers for students. He added that another top priority for ISU was to focus on the alignment of its academic programs with the needs of Idaho's labor market and workforce. He shared about various research projects that benefitted the State and about Idaho's only tuition lock program which held tuition steady for students who met certain credit and grade point requirements.

**PRESENTATION: Boise State University Update.** **Dr. Marlene Tromp**, President, Boise State University (BSU), provided an update about the university (Attachment 4). She stated that BSU worked for Idaho. The university produced the most graduates of all public institutions in the State, and that it was the most cost efficient degree delivery for the smallest public investment. BSU's current enrollment was over 32,000 and it graduated over 5,200 students each year. She explained about cost cutting measures to benefit students such as the discontinuation of low-demand academic programs and the implementation of other campus cost savings. Through these efficiencies and cuts, the university eliminated \$12 million in structural deficit and balanced its budget. **Dr. Tromp** also shared about efforts to fund student scholarships and to meet student financial need. She spoke about BSU's focus to serve rural students, veterans, and first generation college students. She shared about BSU's extensive research portfolio and the return these projects offered the State.

**DISCUSSION:** **Senator Ward-Engelking** asked about the recent changes to the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and how that affected student Pell Grant awards. **President Pemberton** explained that many students lost Pell Grants in the FAFSA changes. She asserted that Idaho's best response was Idaho Launch and the financial assistance it offered students. **Senator Den Hartog** inquired about the average financial aid package for a student. **Presidents Pemberton** and **Wagner** commented that they did not have this information readily available but would provide it later.

**Senator Nichols** stated that she had read that some employers did not require college degrees anymore and asked the presidents to comment on this. **President Wagner** remarked that he expected a continued reliance on traditional degrees such as associate, bachelors, and graduate degrees in the future. He added that institutions needed to be nimble enough to meet the educational and professional needs of students with a variety of training and alternative credentials over the course of their lifetimes. **Mr. Green** added that employers wanted skilled employees and that badges and certificates added value.

**Senator Ward-Engelking** asked the presidents to comment on the increased graduation rates at their institutions and what efforts helped the institutions to achieve these increases. **President Green** said that programs organized around cohorts were very effective. University of Idaho also strived to identify students at risk of dropping out as soon as possible. He shared that efforts were made to support students through core courses such as math which were often roadblocks for students. They also provided general support to students to teach them how to be successful in college.

**Chairman Lent** stated that he learned recently that educational opportunities for incarcerated people lowered recidivism rates and asked the university presidents to consider efforts in that area. **President Pemberton** shared about LCSC's prison education program which was in its second year. She said there were currently 62 students in the program and in the spring they anticipated that their first student would graduate with an associate degree. She offered that LCSC planned a statewide expansion of its prison education program.

**PRESENTATION: Dolly Parton Imagination Library.** Dr. Mark Crandall shared about his educational background and how he became involved in the Dolly Parton Imagination Library (DPIL) program. He explained that the DPIL was a book gifting program for children under the age of five. Families enrolled their children in the program, paid a nominal fee, and the children received a book a month in the mail. Dr. Crandall shared that he and his wife started a DPIL program in Twin Falls. They partnered with United Way in 2019 and rolled out the program in the Magic Valley. He stated that their program had 934 children enrolled in it and that they mailed over 11,000 books. He hoped to spread the word about the program, how it worked, and its benefits to Idaho children.

**PASSED THE GAVEL:** Chairman Lent passed the gavel to Vice Chairman Toews.

**DOCKET NO. 08-0113-2302** Vice Chairman Toews said that **Docket No. 08-0113-2302** was before the Committee for its consideration.

**MOTION:** Senator Herndon moved to approve **Docket No. 08-0113-2302** with the exception of the changes proposed in Section 302, Continuing Eligibility. The motion died for lack of a second.

**DISCUSSION:** Senator Den Hartog asked Senator Herndon if the intention of the motion was to reject the entire section of the Rule. Senator Herndon confirmed that the motion meant to reject the entirety of Section 302. The section remained the same as prior to the proposed changes to the Rule.

Senator Ward-Engelking asked if the decision to exclude Section 302 left students without scholarship funding. Vice Chairman Toews invited Jenn Thompson, Chief Policy and Government Affairs Office, Idaho State Board of Education, to clarify.

Ms. Thompson confirmed that a rejection of the revisions in Section 302 left 342 students without Opportunity Scholarship funding.

**SUBSTITUTE MOTION:** Senator Ward-Engelking moved to approve **Docket No. 08-0113-2302**. Chairman Lent seconded the motion.

**DISCUSSION:** Senator Ward-Engelking voiced concern about the consequences to students. Senator Herndon pointed out discrepancy in the verbiage of the original legislation and the rule and asked for clarification. Ms. Thompson clarified the intent of the rule change. Senator Herndon pointed out inconsistency in the wording between the statute and the rule which created confusion. He recommended to make the rule consistent with terminology used in the statute to avoid confusion. Ms. Thompson thanked him for the feedback.

**SUBSTITUTE MOTION VOTE:** Vice Chairman Toews reminded the Committee of the substitute motion to approve **Docket No. 08-0113-2302**. The substitute motion carried by **voice vote**.

**ADJOURNED:** There being no further business at this time, Chairman Lent adjourned the meeting at 4:25 p.m.

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Senator Lent  
Chair

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Lisa Stein  
Secretary