

MINUTES
HOUSE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

DATE: Tuesday, January 26, 2016

TIME: 9:00 A.M.

PLACE: Room EW41

MEMBERS: Chairman DeMordaunt, Vice Chairman VanOrden, Representatives Shepherd, Wills, Boyle, Clow, Gestrin, Harris, Mendive, McDonald, Dixon, Kerby, Pence, Kloc, Rubel

**ABSENT/
EXCUSED:** None

GUESTS: Rob Winslow, Helen Price, Idaho Association of School Administrators; Harold Ott, Idaho Rural School Administrators; Lindsay Dexter, Idaho Freedom Foundation; Erica Compton, Idaho Stem Action Center; Jason Krezenbeck, Lobby Idaho LLC; Sherri Ybarra, Chuck Zimmerly, Marcia Beckman, State Department of Education

Chairman DeMordaunt called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. The chairman turned the gavel over to **Vice Chair VanOrden**.

RS 24243: **Rep. DeMordaunt** spoke to **RS 24243**, a computer science initiative. This initiative develops standards for computer science instruction and adds one FTE position. The standards will be developed and monitored by the Idaho STEM Action Center, so another government agency is not created. Many businesses in Idaho are struggling to find people who can write computer code. Nationally, approximately 80,000 jobs go unfilled.

MOTION: **Rep. Rubel** made a motion to introduce **RS 24243**. **Motion carried by voice vote.**
Vice Chair VanOrden returned the gavel to **Rep. DeMordaunt**.

RS 24179: **Rep. Ron Nate** spoke to **RS 24179**. **RS 24179** is a joint resolution which amends Article IX, Section 5 of the Idaho Constitution. Also called the Blaine Amendment, it clarifies that the state is not prohibited from granting scholarships, grants, and loans to students or parents of students who will use the money for education at an institution with a religious affiliation. It clarifies that aid to students is not the same as aid to institutions, and aligns language with wording used by the U.S. Supreme Court. **Rep. Nate** said current and future state scholarships could be in jeopardy if challenged in court.

In answering a question regarding if passing this amendment would result in state vouchers for religious schools, **Rep. Nate** replied that the legislation was created to address the current risk of Idaho's scholarships and grants being challenged in court.

In response to questions from the committee, **Rep. Nate** said the Idaho Opportunity Scholarship can be used at any qualifying institution, including colleges such as NNU and BYU. If subjected to a legal challenge, the scholarship may not survive.

MOTION: **Rep. Harris** made a motion to introduce **RS 24179**. **Motion carried by a voice vote.**

Rep. Rubel clarified that her vote of yes was because she believed all bills should get a hearing, but she believed the legislation was ill advised.

Dr. Arthur Vailas, President of Idaho State University, spoke to highlights and initiatives of the university. He is pleased with the governor's initiatives to aid education. The Complete College America Initiative is important, because it focuses primarily on post-secondary student retention and advising. The Bengal Bridge Program encourages students to take their GEDs. Research shows that those who have a GED have a higher retention rate.

The five percent increase in dual enrollment has resulted in a post-secondary retention rate of 86%. Online classes also help with retention rates, as 42% of ISU students are non-traditional, and many are first generation college students who must balance jobs and school. ISU has seen an increase from 641 students to 1,115 students from 2011 to 2015. He believes the funding from the legislature has contributed to this success and asks for continued funding.

The Idaho State University has a high demand for its health care programs, and not enough space or faculty for the demand. The physician assistant program in the Treasure Valley is at 100% capacity, and the college is asking for funding to expand the physical therapy program. The university has also created pharmacy programs in rural areas. The private sector is also involved in ISU programs, and is involved in discussions about how to compete for research grants and use less venture capital.

In response to questions from the committee, **President Vailas** said ISU would use funds for increasing post-secondary completion rates to help bring first-generation students back to college.

Laura Woodworth-Ney, Idaho State University's Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, added that ISU has offered prior learning credit for a long time, especially in technology. A state-wide initiative which would allow for a portfolio system to be transferable between state institutions would help. Money for scholarships for non-traditional students from the workforce would also help. In response to questions from the committee, Ms. Woodworth-Ney said the ISU programs in associate degrees for computer science are at capacity. The university has re-allocated resources from other programs to increase and improve the computer science B.A. program, and to expand to Twin Falls.

In response to questions from the committee, **President Vailas** said the job shortages are not just in computer science, but also in information and analytics jobs. The informatics job market is huge and has 100% job placement world wide.

ADJOURN: There being no further business to come before the committee, the meeting was adjourned at 10:27 a.m.

Representative DeMordaunt
Chair

Jenifer Cavaness-Williams
Secretary