

Minutes of Presidents Council Meeting
September 1, 2015

The Presidents Council met at 11:00 a.m. on September 1, 2015 in the First Floor Boardroom of the Department of Higher Education. Executive Council members present were Charles Welch (co-chair), Sandra Massey (co-chair), Don Bobbitt, Stephen Schoonmaker, Laurence Alexander, Glen Jones, Larry Davis and Margaret Ellibee.

Staff members present were Brett Powell, Harold Criswell, Tim Atkinson, Ann Clemmer, Tara Smith and Nichole Abernathy.

Charles Welch began by welcoming Southern Arkansas University President Trey Berry and Arkansas State University Mid-South Chancellor Debra West to their first Presidents Council meeting.

Stephen Schoonmaker moved to approve the minutes of the July 7, 2015 meeting. Glen Jones seconded and the council unanimously concurred.

Address by Governor Asa Hutchinson

Governor Hutchinson began by complimenting Director Powell. Powell is ambitious in moving Arkansas forward. He is just the kind of man I want as higher education director, said Hutchinson. Next, Hutchinson recognized the Higher Education Coordinating Board for the outstanding job they have done working with the Governor's Office and supporting higher education. He then thanked all of the presidents and chancellors for their leadership. He said that it has been a distinct pleasure of his to be on many of their campuses and to see their innovation. He also thanked them for working together to move Arkansas forward.

Governor Hutchinson said that we continue to have challenges here in Arkansas. Based upon projected workforce needs, 236,000 adult Arkansans will lack the proper education credentials to be employed. This gap is holding Arkansas back, he said. We need to make reversing this our top challenge. Hutchinson said that our goals should be to raise completion and graduation rates of colleges and universities by ten percent, increase the enrollment of adults ages twenty-five through fifty-four and lastly, raise the attainment rates for underserved student groups to equal that of other students.

Governor Hutchinson said that Arkansas has to direct state funding towards the achievement of these goals. With that said, Hutchinson said that he recognizes that the institutions have had to be creative in finding different funding streams and he applauds that. He then assured the presidents and chancellors that he will continue to have their backs when it comes to the state's portion of higher education funding. The presidents and chancellors gave the Governor a standing ovation.

Welch thanked the Governor for his remarks and on behalf of the Presidents Council thanked him for having their backs during the last general session, in terms of funding.

In regards to raising completion and graduation rates, Welch asked if the Governor had a time period. Governor Hutchinson said he thought the sooner the better, however, Dr. Powell would be able to provide a more practical deadline in his master plan.

Welch then commented that Director Powell has done a tremendous job advocating for higher education during the session and the presidents and chancellors truly appreciate his appointment.

Master Plan

Director Powell said that as we sketch a basic outline of what the master plan should look like, ADHE staff are working closely with the Governor's Office during this process. The next step is to get as much input as possible from as many people as possible to ensure that we have the goals that work for the institutions. We also want to make sure that these goals align with the Governor's vision for higher education, said Powell.

Powell said that he would like to have a master plan to present to the AHECB at the October 30 meeting. In order to accomplish this, we have scheduled a series of conversations from September 15 through October 15, to receive input. We have put together a master plan website to help organize this work and provide everyone access to all of the information as we go forward through this process, said Powell.

Next, Powell presented a PowerPoint presentation of the new website. The presentation outlined the master plan's objective and supporting goals. Powell explained the Information Sharing Consortia, which will allow input from higher education stakeholders across the state. He also noted the seven areas of the planning effort are adult learners, college readiness, remediation, student success innovation, affordability, institutional funding and communication strategies. Powell said that institutions will receive a list of the initial dates for these conversations and then we will work from there.

Mark Cochran asked how the non-formulas would fit into this plan. Powell said that his general view is that we can find ways to fund non-formulas as if they were a formula funded entity.

Welch added that one of the key reasons for the master plan was to help change the incorrect perceptions of what Arkansas is doing. We all know the things we are doing to reach these goals, but it is time that everyone does.

In closing, Welch expressed appreciation to the independent presidents and chancellors that attended the meeting.

Announcements

The next Presidents Council meeting will be October 6, 2015.

With no further discussion, the meeting adjourned at 11:45 a.m.