

Minutes of the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee  
January 16, 2012  
Capitol Auditorium  
Boise, Idaho

Co-chair Representative Cliff Bayer called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. Attending the meeting were Senators Elliot Werk (co-chair), Dean Mortimer, and Michelle Stennett, and Representatives Maxine Bell, Elaine Smith, and Shirley Ringo. Senator Jim Hammond could not attend. Also present were Rakesh Mohan, director, Margaret Campbell, administrative coordinator, and all other OPE staff.

Co-chair Bayer welcomed the audience, including:  
Senators John Goedde, Tim Corder, and John Tippetts  
Representatives Bob Nonini, Steven Thayn, Jeff Nessel, Wendy Jaquet, Donna Pence, Bill Killen, and Phylis King  
Mike Rush, executive director, Office of the State Board of Education  
Jason Hancock, deputy chief of staff, Department of Education  
Ann Stephens, administrator, Professional-Technical Education  
Richard Budzick, senior analyst, Division of Financial Management  
Bob Uhlenkott, chief research officer, Department of Labor  
Paul Headlee, principal analyst, Budget and Policy Analysis  
Jamie MacMillan, executive director, J. A. and Kathryn Albertson Foundation

**APPROVAL OF NOVEMBER 30, 2011, MINUTES**

**Representative Ringo moved to approve the minutes of the November 30, 2011, meeting. Senator Mortimer seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously by voice vote.**

**REPORT RELEASE: *REDUCING BARRIERS TO POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION***

**Senator Werk moved to receive the report *Reducing Barriers to Postsecondary Education*. Senator Stennett seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously by voice vote.**

Mr. Mohan thanked the State Board of Education, the Department of Education, the Department of Labor, and the J. A. and Kathryn Albertson Foundation for their cooperation and help on the study. He said the report identified barriers to postsecondary education and linked education with employment in Idaho. Amy Lorenzo, principal evaluator, and Bryon Welch, senior evaluator, summarized the report.

The evaluators said the three most common barriers faced by students and their parents when planning for postsecondary education were access, academic readiness, and affordability. The State Board of Education should establish a stronger focus on need-based scholarships and more data-driven decisions when determining the dollar amount and criteria for state-funded scholarships. Students and their families would also benefit from an improved student-to-

counselor ratio, as recommended to the Department of Education. The department should also dedicate a position to serve as a statewide K–12 counselor coordinator.

The board had recently set a goal for 60 percent of Idahoans between ages 25 and 34 to have a college degree or a certificate by the year 2020. However, the board needed to accurately establish a baseline and a measurement for progress. The board should also establish performance measures and benchmarks to strategically increase the number of degrees awarded at public institutions, and coordinate with private institutions and proprietary schools.

Thirty-one percent of students responding to an OPE survey listed the likelihood of getting a job once they complete additional education as one of the greatest challenges when making decisions about postsecondary education. Employment projections suggest that the majority of jobs in Idaho will continue to be those requiring less than an associate's degree. The board should formally coordinate efforts with the Department of Labor, as well as business and education stakeholders, to develop a statewide strategic plan that will produce the right types of graduates for the right types of jobs available in Idaho now and in the future.

Referring to the formal response by Budget and Policy Analysis, Representative Bell noted that the board had reverted \$1.3 million in scholarship money to the general fund in the past two years because the board did not award the money. She recommended the board work with the Education committees to keep the money in the scholarship fund from year to year.

Representative Ringo said the report did not have recommendations for academic readiness; however, universities report that students need remedial help. She asked whether OPE would be monitoring this concern in the future. She also asked whether the state had data for the number of Idahoans with postsecondary education who have moved to Idaho and who have moved away. Was the state tracking retention? Ms. Lorenzo said the state's measures to address academic readiness were in their infancy and OPE was giving the measures time to develop. She said the American Community Survey only collected data for residents of Idaho and did not track whether an Idaho graduate moved out of state.

Senator Werk clarified his understanding of the overall message of the report: college was expensive and the job market did not support more degrees. He said he saw a fundamental disconnect in ambition, cost of education, and outcome. Ms. Lorenzo agreed with his assessment and said that if the goal was to increase the education level of Idahoans, the workforce also needed to be supported.

Representative Smith said she appreciated Budget and Policy Analysis' response and asked whether a statewide counselor coordinator could also be put in charge of disbursing scholarship funds. Ms. Lorenzo said the two recommendations were not linked because the counselor position came under the direction of the Department of Education and the scholarship fund was under the board. Representative Smith asked how the state can ensure scholarship money gets awarded. Ms. Lorenzo said that Budget and Policy Analysis was working with the board to prevent the issue from happening again.

Co-chair Bayer acknowledged the attendance of Dr. Stephen Cooke, professor at the University of Idaho. The co-chair said Dr. Cook's research had informed the findings of the report.

Co-chair Bayer called on Dr. Mike Rush, executive director, State Board of Education, to address the committee. Dr. Rush thanked JLOC members for their time and for commissioning the study. He said he appreciated the services of OPE in identifying hurdles. He agreed with the report's finding that the state had a mismatch of current education levels as compared with the education levels needed in the workforce. He also indicated that the board needed help with its method of dispersing scholarships. He said the board had to guess at the number of students who would take advantage of the entitlement scholarships each year when dispersing the funds.

Representative Ringo asked whether the Promise B scholarship was sufficient in reducing financial barriers to postsecondary education. Dr. Rush said scholarships needed to make a difference to reduce barriers. The average award of a Promise B scholarship was \$400, well less than the cost of tuition.

Senator Werk asked about the funding stream for the statewide longitudinal data system. Dr. Rush said the board was using existing internal funds to develop the data system. This method of funding was not a fast way to implement the system, but it would work.

Co-chair Bayer called on Jason Hancock, deputy chief of staff, Department of Education, to address the committee. Mr. Hancock thanked OPE for its work and referred to the department's formal response for comments on the report.

Referring to the department's position that all educators have a responsibility to help students pursue their education after high school, Senator Werk said that "when everybody has the job, then nobody gets it done." He asked about the department's deflection of a school counselor coordinator position. Mr. Hancock said that with more counselors, students would get more one-on-one time; however, resources were finite. The department was taking a systematic approach by not adding more resources so funding can go to the salaries of current educators. Other less expensive strategies can be incorporated. For example, the department was offering the SAT test at no cost to the student.

Co-chair Bayer called on Bob Uhlenkott, chief research officer, Department of Labor, to address the committee. Mr. Uhlenkott said the report was a tremendous work by OPE. It was an exciting time for collaborations. He said Idaho employment would grow faster in all levels of education because of the quality of life the state offered and the in-migration of retirees who would have a need for services.

No one from the Governor's office was attending to comment.

Co-chair Bayer called on Paul Headlee, principal analyst, Budget and Policy Analysis, to address the committee. Mr. Headlee said his office would work with the board to identify issues with distributing scholarship money and tackle the problem in Idaho Code, Administrative Code, and with board staff.

Co-chair Bayer called on Jamie MacMillan, executive director, J. A. and Kathryn Albertson Foundation, to address the committee. Ms. MacMillan said the foundation agreed with the barriers cited, although affordability was sometimes a barrier more accurately defined as a lack of knowledge about existing financial options and overwhelming financial aid processes. While scholarships were important, the state was funding them without information on outcomes.

Ms. MacMillan said the foundation was gravely concerned about the economic future of Idaho and encouraged the development of a skilled labor pool or face being the minimum wage capital of the nation. She said a state plan should focus on the alignment of three distinct systems: K–12, postsecondary, and workforce to create a cradle-to-career pipeline with determined outcomes. The alignment of these systems could play a critical role in reducing the academic readiness barrier.

Representative Ringo thanked OPE for a wonderful job on the report. She said she wanted to see follow-up efforts on the recommendations, although she realized that the state did not yet have the tools to measure outcomes. Also, she said she wanted to look at the effectiveness of the new measures for academic readiness.

**Representative Ringo moved to conduct a follow-up review in one year. Senator Werk seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously by voice vote.**

The next JLOC meeting will be held in a week on Monday, January 23.

*The meeting adjourned at 6:00 p.m.*