

MINUTES
SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

DATE: Wednesday, January 26, 2022

TIME: 3:00 P.M.

PLACE: Room WW55

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Thayn, Vice Chairman Lent, Senators Den Hartog, Crabtree, Woodward, Blair (Johnson), Cook, Ward-Engelking, and Nelson

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 Thayn** called the meeting of the Senate Education Committee (Committee) to order at 3:00 p.m.

MINUTES APPROVAL: **Senator Nelson** moved to approve the Minutes of January 17, 2022. **Senator Den Hartog** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

RS 29242C1 **Relating to Education. Senator Den Hartog**, District 22, stated the proposed legislation would establish an Empowering Parents grant program using \$50 million in one-time American Rescue Plan Act funds.

MOTION: **Vice Chairman Lent** moved to send **RS 29242C1** to print. **Senator Woodward** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

PRESENTATION & DISCUSSION: **Four Year University Updates. Dr. Scott Green**, President, University of Idaho (UI), introduced himself to the Committee. **President Green** provided accomplishments and initiatives of the President's Leadership Council (PLC) .

Vice Chairman Lent asked what the schools are doing to increase graduation rates. **President Green** reported the national average graduation rate was 60 percent, similar to Idaho's four-year institutions. He said the PLC has prioritized improving student retention and graduation rates.

Dr. Kevin Satterlee, President, Idaho State University (ISU), introduced himself to the Committee. **President Satterlee** reported on ISU's 2021 accomplishments and 2022 strategic priorities. He explained the new ISU Navigate software program to identify at risk students and the Bengal Connect peer mentoring program. **President Satterlee** noted ISU's activities to implement H 377 from the 2021 Legislative Session.

Dr. Marlene Tromp, President, Boise State University (BSU), introduced herself to the Committee. She described BSU's Community Impact Program and new scholarship and assistance programs for Idaho students and military veterans. **President Tromp** reviewed BSU's strategies to implement H 377.

Dr. Cynthia Pemberton, President, Lewis-Clark State College (LCSC), introduced herself to the Committee. **President Pemberton** described LCSC's role in higher education and positive attributes. She reviewed LCSC's use of its fiscal year 2022 budget appropriation. **President Pemberton** explained LCSC's actions to address concerns raised in the 2021 Legislative Session.

President Green reported on UI's successes and new research facilities. He described UI's cybersecurity degrees and work with the U.S. Department of Defense on cybersecurity issues. **President Green** noted UI's curriculum review and actions taken to comply with H 377.

Senator Nelson asked about UI's employee retention and President Green's recommendations to resolve employee turnover issues. **President Green** answered that UI had experienced up to 20 percent staff turnover. He added some faculty positions have remained open for two years. He noted the difficulty in competing with the private sector. **President Satterlee** reported a need for radiation safety technicians for ISU's nuclear engineering program. He observed those positions are difficult to fill and require more competitive salaries. He remarked that a second food service location did not open until November due to a lack of employees. **President Pemberton** suggested supporting the Governor's recommended pay increases and Change in Employee Compensation (CEC). She observed that LCSC experienced staff attrition because salaries were insufficient.

Senator Ward-Engelking asked how the universities previously paid for CEC. **President Satterlee** responded that prior to 2009, the Legislature budgeted salary increases from a dedicated fund. Since that time, CEC has been budgeted from the General Fund, resulting in higher tuition costs to pay for CEC.

Senator Blair inquired what proactive steps could be taken to assist first generation students. **President Tromp** answered that universities must help students understand the value of higher education from an early age. She suggested creating cohorts of student communities and eliminating barriers encountered by students in the application and admissions processes. **President Pemberton** described Talent Search, a new LCSC program that places individuals in rural high schools with low "go on" rates to encourage and assist student enrollment. (See Attachment 1)

**PRESENTATION
&
DISCUSSION:**

Teacher of the Year Todd Knight. Sherri Ybarra, Superintendent of Public Instruction, introduced 2022 Idaho State Teacher of the Year, Todd Knight. **Superintendent Ybarra** gave examples of Mr. Knight's teaching accomplishments to explain why Mr. Knight received the honor.

Todd Knight, Teacher, Crossroads Middle School, West Ada School District, introduced himself to the Committee. He gave an overview of his background, education, and teaching experience. **Mr. Knight** presented his opinion that standardized tests are unhelpful to students and teachers as presently written and used (see Attachment 2). He observed it is impossible to use Idaho Standards Achievement Test (ISAT) data to improve or nurture student learning. **Mr. Knight** advised the ISAT does not measure a student's academic growth. He noted that ISAT questions were poorly designed, leading to spending valuable instruction time on how to take the test rather than content knowledge. (See Attachment 2)

Chairman Thayne announced that the Charter School Commission Annual Report would be rescheduled to a later meeting.

Chairman Thayne asked the university presidents to list the courses where various topics, including natural law and America's role in the development of a free market economy, are taught at their schools. He also inquired what the universities had done to ensure all students' voices were heard.

President Pemberton responded that she previously provided a list to Chairman Thayne of LCSC 100 and 200 level general education courses covering the topics he mentioned. She added she addressed the issue of student concerns in her presentation.

President Green listed history, philosophy, and political science courses, together with a number of law school courses, that include the topic of natural law. He added that UI wants students to develop their own thoughts by bringing in speakers on a variety of topics.

President Tromp advised that BSU teaches these topics in political science, political philosophy, and American government courses. She said students bring the topics into other class discussions.

President Satterlee remarked that the ISU general education curriculum includes American national government, political science, philosophy, and ethics courses. He added that there are different opinions about the origin of law.

ADJOURNMENT: There being no further business at this time, **Chairman Thayn** adjourned the meeting at 4:41 p.m.

Senator Thayn
Chair

Katy Morden
Secretary

Jeanne Jackson-Heim
Assistant Secretary