

MINUTES  
**SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

- DATE:** Tuesday, January 24, 2023
- TIME:** 3:00 P.M.
- PLACE:** Room WW55
- MEMBERS PRESENT:** Chairman Lent, Vice Chairman Toews, Senators Den Hartog, Nichols, Carlson, 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 Senate Education Committee (Committee) to order at 3:00 p.m.
- WELCOME:** **Chairman Lent** welcomed all to the Committee meeting.
- PRESENTATION: Introduce Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education: Demi Michelau,** President of the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE), presented an overview of the work that WICHE did, the history and mission of the organization, as well as relevant information and statistics that related to higher education in Idaho. **Ms. Michelau** highlighted their Student Access Programs, which offered reduced tuition for students residing in states in WICHE, and the benefits of these programs. Additionally, she detailed the policy analysis and research work that WICHE provided for legislators. This included the Legislative Advisory Committee, which was a network of state legislators across the west that could share and discuss research and policy ideas relating to higher education. **Ms. Michelau** also presented the Knocking on the College Door, which was a report with available information concerning high school graduation projections and data. She mentioned the main areas of focus in Idaho that WICHE had been working on.
- DISCUSSION:** **Senator Herndon** asked for clarification on whether the declining number of projected high school graduates was a result of declining birth rates. **Ms. Michelau** confirmed that the decline in high school graduates were a result of declining birth rates. **Vice Chairman Toews** wanted to confirm whether the amount the partner states paid was up to 150 percent of in-state tuition. **Ms. Michelau** confirmed that amount. **Vice Chairman Toews** then followed up by inquiring about what the amount would be for out-of-state. **Ms. Michelau** said that she did not have that information as it varied state by state.
- PRESENTATION: Education Week: 4-year Universities:** The presidents of each of the major four-year universities of Idaho presented an overview on their respective schools. Each president provided the Committee with an update on their school's performance based upon different metrics and discussed any new projects their school had been working on over the past year. The presenters included: Scott Green of the University of Idaho (U of I), Kevin Satterlee of Idaho State University (ISU), Dr. Marlene Tromp of Boise State University (BSU), and Dr. Cynthia Pemberton of Lewis-Clark State College (LCSC). Each of the speakers presented by order of availability and not necessarily by the order that appeared on the agenda.

**PRESENTATION: Education Week: 4-Year Universities: Dr. Cynthia Pemberton** gave the presentation for the Idaho State Board of Education (ISBE) instead of Matt Freeman, who yielded his time to her. **Dr. Pemberton** explained to the Committee what the Presidents Leadership Council (PLC) of the ISBE was, and the group's mission for higher education. She detailed the work that the PLC did in order to better Idaho's four-year universities.

**PRESENTATION: Education Week: 4-Year Universities: Scott Green**, President, U of I, reported on some of the major accomplishments of the U of I within the last year. This included being named the number one best value of any public university in the west by U.S. News and World Report, beginning with the 4-H Learn Everywhere Program, and being awarded a \$55 million grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture to fund climate-smart agricultural research. Additionally, **Mr. Green** highlighted the funding priorities for U of I for the upcoming year. This included improvements to the McCall Outdoor Science School, Meat Science Laboratory, and the Center for Plant and Soil Health, as well as the creation of a new building for the Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC) and military science programs. Lastly, he discussed some of the ways U of I collaborated with other four-year institutions across the State.

**PRESENTATION: Education Week: 4-Year Universities: Kevin Satterlee**, President, ISU, detailed some of the goals and accomplishments that ISU achieved over the past year. **Mr. Satterlee** proudly announced that ISU completed their institutional five-year plan in which they met five goals that were set before them. **Mr. Satterlee** also pointed out the growing student retention rate at ISU over the past few years due to institutional improvements in student experiences. **Mr. Satterlee** then emphasized the role of ISU in educating future health care professionals in the State of Idaho, as well as the importance of investing in the expansion of health care education facilities, in order to provide more health care workers.

**PRESENTATION: Education Week: 4-Year Universities: Dr. Marlene Tromp**, President, BSU, presented to the Committee the different manners in which BSU benefitted Idaho and its various communities. She mentioned the Community Impact Program (CIP), which served BSU students in rural communities, and the Veteran's Service Support Center, which benefitted veteran students on campus. **Dr. Tromp** commented on the growing enrollment rates in spite of the COVID-19 pandemic and that BSU had the highest graduation numbers of all Idaho four-year institutions. She also highlighted the success of BSU alumni in the State of Idaho and reported that 45 percent of BSU graduates left school with no student loan debt.

**PRESENTATION: Education Week: 4-Year Universities: Dr. Cynthia Pemberton**, LCSC, described the many ways in which LCSC served the State of Idaho and its citizens. **Dr. Pemberton** emphasized how many of LCSC's students were low income, first generation, and/or non-traditional college students that needed some form of financial aid. Despite this, she mentioned that student retention at LCSC had increased over the past decade. She also mentioned how LCSC served incarcerated individuals through the prison education program. Lastly, she stressed to the Committee how LCSC had struggled with employee retention because of below-average salaries compared to other four-year institutions.

**DISCUSSION:** **Senator Herndon** asked if Dr. Tromp or Mr. Green could explain their respective university's diversity, equity, and inclusion programs in relation to gender identity. **Dr. Tromp** stated that industry partners had explicitly requested that BSU prepare students for diverse workplace environments and that the programs had been a part of workforce development preparation. **Dr. Tromp** asked if Senator Herndon could clarify what was the gender identity portion of his question. **Senator Herndon** asked what BSU meant when the website noted it wanted to make students feel safe in relation to gender identity. **Dr. Tromp** responded by saying that gender identity was how an individual understood their own gender and what the social norms around gender were. She mentioned she would want every student to feel safe no matter their gender identity.

**Mr. Green** discussed how U of I's diversity and inclusion programs were reviewed by independent investigators and found that there were no indications of indoctrination from these programs and that the initiatives were appropriate and necessary for the success of the university. Additionally, **Mr. Green** mentioned how the investigations also found that high level diversity and inclusion staff at U of I were not funded with appropriated dollars.

**Senator Ward-Engelking** asked if any of the directors knew the monetary return on investment from Idaho universities. **Dr. Pemberton** informed the Committee that the State Board of Education estimated that the \$1.7 billion invested in 2019-2020 would see a return of \$8.1 billion into the Idaho economy over the course of the student's working lives. **Senator Lenney** asked for clarification on what the law firm that investigated U of I found, and if it was in fact in conflict with entrepreneurs that were raising concern with the diversity, equity, and inclusion programs. **Mr. Green** responded and confirmed the results of the investigation and that accusations of indoctrination were created by conflict entrepreneurs.

**Chairman Lent** asked what each president would like the Committee to focus on aside from anything financial. **Mr. Satterlee** emphasized the need for investment to grow enrollment capacities in Idaho universities in order to meet the needs of Idahoans across the State. **Dr. Tromp** wanted the members of the Committee to take away from the meeting that BSU created a tremendous impact on the State with their graduates and degree programs. **Mr. Green** highlighted that the way the State had defined in demand careers had a big effect on U of I and stressed the importance of growing the enrollment capacity for Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) programs. **Dr. Pemberton** implored the Committee to support Idaho citizens while remembering the benefits that higher education had in their own lives.

**PRESENTATION:** **Charter School Commission Report.** **Jenn Thompson**, Director, Idaho Public Charter School Commission (IPCSC), presented an overview of the IPCSC which included the mission, history, and statistics about charter schools in Idaho. She outlined the manner in which the IPCSC oversaw the performance of charter schools, which was on the basis of operational, financial, and academic outcomes.

**DISCUSSION:** **Senator Lenney** inquired what Ms. Thompson's thoughts were on the possibility of religious or sectarian charter schools. **Ms. Thompson** responded that she could not speak to the IPCSC's opinion on that. However, she mentioned that she would recommend not to approve these schools based upon the law as it then stood.

**ADJOURNED:** There being no further business at this time, **Chairman Lent** adjourned the meeting at 4:32 p.m.

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Senator Lent  
Chair

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Linette Grantham  
Secretary

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Tyler Allen  
Assistant Secretary