

MINUTES  
**SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

**DATE:** Wednesday, January 25, 2023

**TIME:** 3:00 P.M.

**PLACE:** Room WW55

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Chairman Lent, Vice Chairman Toews, Senators 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 meeting of the Senate Education Committee (Committee) to order at 3:03 p.m.

**WELCOME:** **Chairman Lent** welcomed all to the meeting.

**MOTION:** **Senator Lenney** moved to place **RS 30093** on the agenda for Thursday, January 25, 2023 for a print hearing. **Chairman Lent** seconded the motion. **Chairman Lent** stated, all in favor to revise the current agenda before the committee say "aye". The motion carried by **voice vote**. **\*See Note pg. 4**

**PRESENTATION:** **Idaho's Community Colleges. Rick Aman**, President, College of Eastern Idaho (CEI), noted all of the college presidents would provide an overview of the mission and the value proposition of community colleges in Idaho. He explained the presentation would highlight how the colleges prepared juniors to move into a university and how transfer credit worked, what career technical education was as an applied science, and workforce training as it was pertinent in business and industry. He noted each college had multiple missions but each college took on the complexion of the region they served. **Mr. Aman** talked about the workforce development component at CEI. He stated that the realm community colleges encompassed was that of access, affordability, nimbleness, flexibility, and responsibility. He remarked energy innovation and technology from Idaho National Lab (INL) was of great value. Broadband and the importance that fiber brought to the State was almost as powerful and important as electricity. The job of CEI was to work with the INL or other employers associated with the lab, and that included hospitals. This was essential to the mission of the college. The goal was to create a workforce in order to help employees obtain a family wage job. They not only served the students of the region, but the employers.

**Mr. Aman** remarked the purpose of the community colleges was to help retrain workers. The partnerships that CEI had working with businesses and industry made up one of the four key elements for a community college.

**Gordon Jones**, President, College of Western Idaho (CWI), talked about themes and access to the community colleges. Access was for any level of income for Idahoans and the ability to utilize what college best suited the individual. Community colleges offered affordability. The development of critical thinking and broad thinking was taught at all of the community colleges. The ability to earn credits allowed students who wanted to continue to pursue a four-year degree was made available at the community colleges with a greater level of affordability. Common Core curriculum of the same caliber offered at the community colleges was unique and enabled students to attain junior status at a fraction of the cost. A pathway was provided if a student had the work ethic and was able to be coached to have an academic transfer, which was more difficult for some of the other institutions to design.

**Mr. Jones** pointed out that dual credit was the vision of the State of Idaho to bring the ability for motivated or interested students and faculty at the secondary level to align curriculum to the college level classes, and taught that in the high school. This enabled students to simultaneously continue a high school education while receiving transferable credit at any of the Idaho institutions. Because of this, students were empowered to find ways to earn those kinds of credentials that allowed them to continue on and find a more affordable path to a four-year degree. Collectively, the community colleges were the largest segment of the providers of dual credit.

**Greg South**, President, College of North Idaho (CNI), reported the community colleges provided an affordable education, noting not everyone needed a bachelor's degree. He gave an overview of career and technical education provided by CNI. He stated non-tangible boots-on-the-ground skill sets could not be replicated, which was a key differentiator of a community college. He pointed out the industrial mechanic/millwright program offered at CNI had a starting pay at \$27 an hour. Within three years the pay increased from \$42 to \$45 an hour. The skills involved were welding, hydraulics, electricity rigging, pipe fitting, mechanical drives, and transmissions. CNI students received hands-on experience and were partnered with industry that provided training. The college worked with local businesses to train workers. About 90 percent of the partners hired CNI graduates immediately upon graduation in a technical field career. Nursing jobs had an approximate 100 percent placement upon graduation. Programs offered included cybersecurity, graphic design, and culinary arts.

**Dean Fisher**, President, College of Southern Idaho (CSI), remarked he wanted the Committee to think of the community colleges as the regional hubs for affordable education throughout the State. He stated the colleges were affordable, connected community colleges that were serving local employers. He stated there were technical advisory committees that informed the degree programs at the colleges. The community colleges listened to industry needs and deployed the solutions needed from the colleges. He noted several of the college presidents served on the Office of Aging, provided adult protective services, congregate meals, and services. Head Start services were also provided. Some had athletic programs connected to the community. He reiterated community colleges were the most affordable pathway for a student to become a junior working towards a bachelor's degree and the quickest, most local way for an individual to enter the workforce.

**Mr. Aman** informed the Committee that the total budget at CEI was \$21,000,600 with approximately \$6,000,000 that came from the General Fund. Because the facility was relatively new, there was not an Innovation Energy Technology Building. The college was working very hard to get funding. A survey was conducted that showed that almost 91 percent of students liked the experience at the college. The goal at CEI was to graduate students with a degree in associate of arts, associate of science, or an associate in applied science. Students were asked to have an experience with business and industry and to receive an industry-recognized certification (Attachment 1).

**Mr. Jones** noted individuals could step into an affordable program where they improved their lives and found economic and social mobility. He stated community colleges were front and center at delivering affordability and employability. He said 98 percent of CWI students were Idahoans. Individuals coming from secondary schools looked to post-secondary options with half attending community colleges. Affordability ranged from the \$3,300 for 24 credit hours. Return on investment was key when speaking about employability. He cited an example of a nurse, in two years or under, could be earning \$80,000 to \$90,000 a year with only an approximate investment of \$10,000 to \$12,000. He noted another example of a traveling nurse, that because of her CWA education, made \$240,000 a year. Academic transfers and dual credit were a substantial portion of offerings at CWI (Attachment 1).

**Mr. South** informed the Committee that the actual amount of the budget for CNI was from the General Fund. He noted tuition and fees had not increased in over five years.

**Mr. Fisher** remarked the community colleges were regional, affordable hubs of education disseminated through the State, serving local industry and the learners in each of the distinctive regions in distinctive ways. CSI and other community colleges had sustained good, healthy, positive enrollment trends.

**DISCUSSION:**

**Vice Chairman Toews** asked the presenters about the transfer credits and what was the percentage of students who transferred to other colleges in Idaho. **Mr. Fisher** noted the top six transfer institutions were all Idaho colleges.

**Senator Den Hartog** asked what were the challenges in hiring staff to teach cybersecurity. **Mr. Aman** stated it was difficult to attract cybersecurity professionals. Adjunct faculty, who worked at INL, taught in the evenings or weekends. These were working practitioners. The Western Interstate Commission on Higher Education, of which he and Chairman Lent served as Commissioners, scheduled a tabletop training for the near future related to cybersecurity. He noted the two most important programs were cybersecurity and nursing.

**Mr. Jones** added CWI was to be accredited by the U. S. Department of Defense for certain cyber roles. This would unlock jobs for Idahoans to work in these high demand areas of cyber.

**Senator Semmelroth** queried what was the plan to address the potential loss of accreditation at CNI. **Mr. South** replied it was very premature to speculate and inappropriate because the college was fully accredited. He noted he was aware of the issues and all were working together to overcome these governance issues.

**Senator Nichols** asked how CNI determined what was offered as a school, what were the top three things that attributed to lower tuition rates, and what was the percentage of completion for degrees in certifications programs. In response to this question, **Mr. Jones** stated he would answer the questions in reverse order. He noted there were over 90 programs and offerings and that each had a percentage completion rate. There was a 95 percent, not just completion, but job placement, among Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning (HVAC), plumbing, and electrical.

**Mr. South** commented the average completion rate was 23 percent. However, that was deceptive at this level because that was not the only way to measure completion rates. Some students left after a year and entered the workforce without completing the program. Some of the workforce training did not involve obtaining a degree, but students completed set goals for themselves and this was not reflected in the 23 percent level.

**Mr. Fisher** commented tough decisions had to be made regarding class offerings. He explained programs that had a low enrollment and that were not yielding job placements were put on a warning status. Sometimes those programs had to be cut, which was not an easy decision. He noted keeping in touch by ongoing communications with the employers in the region made a lot of sense. At some point, improved resources had to help the college pay a more competitive wage for teachers. The graduation rate was 44 percent. Within 100 percent of the time, the graduation rate was at 31 percent. Two-thirds of the students received Pell Grants and often worked either a full-time or part-time job.

**Mr. Aman** stated that when it came to new programs the choice of scheduling classes was driven by business and industry. Business and industry requested training for students in advanced manufacturing, dental hygiene, and construction. The cost per credit was approximately \$140. Faculty taught 30 credits a year for nine months. There was a \$5,000 deficit in salaries. The Idaho State General Fund allocated monies to make up the difference. He explained students were able to get a job in plumbing because they did not have to be in training for two to five years. When a student achieved the status of a junior and transferred to a university, the community college had helped them achieve their goals. Most students who transferred to a college or university finished with a degree.

**Chairman Lent** thanked the college presidents for their presentations. He stated they were the future and the Committee appreciated all of their hard work.

**ADJOURNED:**

There being no further business at this time, **Chairman Lent** adjourned the meeting at 4:09 p.m.

**\*Note:** The motion made by the Senator from District 13 was out of order. RS 30093 was not in the possession of the committee or listed on the agenda as an action item. RS's are owned by the sponsor until they are listed on the agenda and introduced by the sponsor to the committee.

Pursuant to *Mason's Manual of Legislative Procedure* Section 761 subsection 8 which states: "It is not within the authority of a legislative body or its committees to proceed with consideration of a bill that is not in its possession."

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Senator Lent  
Chair

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Linette Grantham  
Secretary

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Linda Kambeitz  
Assistant Secretary