

MINUTES  
**SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

**DATE:** Monday, March 20, 2023

**TIME:** 2:00 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 meeting of the Senate Education Committee (Committee) to order at 2:00 p.m.

**MINUTES APPROVAL:** **Senator Herndon** moved to approve the Minutes of February 9, 2023. **Vice Chairman Toews** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

**MINUTES APPROVAL:** **Senator Nichols** moved to approve the Minutes of February 20, 2023. **Senator Herndon** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

**MINUTES APPROVAL:** **Senator Lenney** moved to approve the Minutes of March 8, 2023. **Senator Ward-Engelking** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

**MINUTES APPROVAL:** **Senator Semmelroth** moved to approve the Minutes of March 9, 2023. **Senator Den Hartog** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

**H 311** **COMMUNITY COLLEGES - Amends existing law to allow legislative appropriations for upper divisions in community college districts.** **Representative Petzke** said the objective of **H 311** was to unlock lower cost structures of Idaho community colleges so they could offer bachelor's degree programs at a lower cost than traditional four-year universities and colleges. The State Board of Education (SBE) was the entity that would approve a program like that, and the bill would amend a 60 year-old section of Code that enabled community colleges to offer those degree paths. If passed, the program would receive funding through the standard appropriation process where the community colleges would present before the Joint Finance-Appropriations Committee (JFAC) and the Legislature would have the authority to approve or deny their requests.

**DISCUSSION:** **Chairman Lent** said he saw this legislation as a great tool that had the ability to enable those that were prevented from transitioning into management-level roles because they did not have a bachelor's degree.

**Senator Herndon** asked how many bachelor's degree programs were offered at community colleges in Idaho at that time. **Representative Petzke** responded that he only knew of one that was offered, and that was at the College of Southern Idaho (CSI) for an area-specific industry. He continued to say that there were several other schools that attempted to do the same, but they were not approved.

**Senator Lenney** asked if there had been any successful attempts at similar proposals in other states and what those looked like. **Representative Petzke** said there had been 24 other states that made legislative approaches to achieve this goal. He said the reason so many states had pursued this was that, when the community college system was introduced, the intent was for associate's degrees

to satisfy the entry-level requirement for many professional opportunities, but that was not the case anymore, as most require bachelor's degrees.

**Vice Chairman Toews** asked for a comparison of the average tuition of traditional, four-year institutions and community colleges in Idaho. **Representative Petzke** said, for in-state students, the average tuition per year at a community college was approximately \$3,300 and \$9,000 for the four-year universities. He also said that, in his talks with college presidents in Idaho, it was highly possible students would have the ability to get their bachelor's degree for less than \$20,000 if this legislation passed.

**Senator Nichols** asked if those 24 other states saw a select few bachelor's programs be introduced at their community colleges or if they were able to offer plenty right away. **Representative Petzke** said many of them took different approaches to accomplish that goal, so there was not a precise answer.

**PRESENTATION:** **Gordon Jones**, President, College of Western Idaho (CWI), highlighted the contrast between traditional two-year and four-year schools, where combined tuition and fees were \$139 per credit and \$375 per credit, respectively. At \$139 per credit, community college students saw about 40 percent savings on their education. **Mr. Jones** said CWI had the same hiring qualifications as four-year institutions for faculty, due to the requirement that professors had at least a master's degree, and many of them also taught classes at four-year colleges and universities. He said community colleges got that name because, often, they had no on-campus accommodations, which was a major factor in cost-savings. Most students lived in close proximity to their school, hence the name for schools that operated under that model. **Mr. Jones** said, if **H 311** passed, the potential for adult learners to complete bachelor's programs would increase greatly. With over 88 percent of his 30,000 plus students coming from Ada and Canyon counties, he believed CWI had the ability to maintain the commuter model and provide the same standards of education for bachelor's degree programs.

**DISCUSSION:** **Senator Ward-Engelking** asked if CWI received any local or regional tax dollars. **Mr. Jones** said CWI received about 15 percent of their annual budget from real estate in Ada and Canyon counties, a figure between \$10 and \$12 million per year. He noted that those homeowners paid less to support CWI than they did for mosquito abatement.

**Senator Nichols** asked how CWI stood to benefit from **H 311** passing. **Mr. Jones** said it was the State that was the biggest beneficiary of the legislation, because the improved access to higher education would result in improved earning potential for Idahoans and better marketing for CWI. He said increased offerings at community colleges would allow them to supplement their faculty with talented personnel that could improve the quality of education across every department. The final benefit he noted was that the community colleges could add specialized programs that could plug gaps in the workforce, like in the healthcare sector, for example.

**PRESENTATION:** **Rick Aman**, President, College of Eastern Idaho (CEI), emphasized a point made earlier that many professionals that had associate's degrees had a barrier to management-level positions because many required bachelor's degrees, and **H 311** had the potential to help advance their careers and earning potential for themselves and their families.

**DISCUSSION:** **Chairman Lent** indicated his belief that community colleges were in a special position to help the State achieve its higher education goals. He urged President Aman to come back to the Legislature in the future with ideas to shorten the time needed to complete a degree, how to improve affordability, and make curriculum more student-centered.

**Senator Lenney** commended Idaho community colleges and their presidents for their ability to deliver quality education on lean budgets, but he had reservations about the possibility of unintended consequences affecting their results.

**MOTION:** **Senator Den Hartog** moved to send **H 311** to the floor with a **do pass** recommendation. **Senator Ward-Engelking** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**. **Senator Lenney** asked to be recorded as voting nay.

**PRESENTATION: Student Support Success: Advising, Faculty, Mentorship, Veteran Services, and Community College.** **Cally Roach**, Idaho State Board of Education (SBE) member, said the goal of the SBE was to increase the completion rate of certificates and degree programs within Idaho's public education system to help meet workforce needs in Idaho's changing economy. She commended Idaho's schools for the efforts that were made to in the areas of career counseling, mentorships, veteran services, and support for community colleges.

**TESTIMONY:** **Quinton Thurber**, CWI Student, was enrolled in the Heavy Duty Diesel program. He said the skills he developed at CWI helped him secure his job at Jackson Group Peterbilt.

**Seferino Tapia**, CWI Graduate, Caldwell Police Officer, Idaho Medal of Honor Recipient, said he had the challenge of finding a career that gave him purpose after his return from military service. He said the hands-on classroom environment helped him thrive. He said he hoped to return to CWI one day to serve as an instructor like the ones who helped him.

**Chance Reynolds**, Idaho State University (ISU) student, served as a Senator in the student government at ISU from the College of Education before he won the vice presidency. **Chance** said the start of his college career was fraught with complications, since it began during the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. The struggles that came with that turbulent period made him wonder if he truly wanted to return to school, but the counsel from family and friends convinced him to give it another shot. His advisor helped him get out of those rough times and laid out his path to completing his degree and kept him on track. He fell in love with his coursework after he decided to major in secondary education with a focus on social studies and minor in history.

**Jorge Hernandez**, Veteran, Boise State (BSU) student, was working on his Masters in Business Administration (MBA). After his service, he received an associate's degree at CWI before he moved to Boise to pursue a bachelor's and, later, an MBA. He said the transition from military life to that of a student was very challenging, but the right support made it possible. He said the Veteran Services program at BSU was very helpful to him, and it was a one-of-a-kind program in Idaho. Mr. Hernandez said there were several challenging points during his pursuit of a degree where he was on the verge of dropping out, but the Veteran Services program gave him the support to stick it out.

**Amy Josey**, Veteran, BSU Student, grew up in rural California, and said there was not a lot of opportunity for her before she joined the military. After she left the military, she decided to move to Idaho to pursue a degree. She said the transition to the life of a student was challenging, and that she felt a bit out of place because she was older than many of her peers. When she found and began using the services

of the Veteran Services Center, she felt she finally had the support to accomplish her academic goals. She said the most valuable part of that program was the work study mentorship program, which helped instill a mindset of professional development and made her a more successful student.

**DISCUSSION:** **Senator Ward-Engelking** asked Mr. Tapia how he won the Idaho Medal of Honor. **Mr. Tapia** said his patrol team's response to an active shooter situation in a neighborhood setting in 2020 resulted in his being awarded the Idaho Medal of Honor.

**ADJOURNED:** There being no further business at this time, **Chairman Lent** adjourned the meeting at 2:45 p.m.

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Senator Lent  
Chair

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Linette Grantham  
Secretary

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Kieran Sprague  
Assistant Secretary