

MINUTES  
**SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

- DATE:** Wednesday, February 04, 2026
- TIME:** 3:00 P.M.
- PLACE:** Room WW55
- MEMBERS PRESENT:** Chairman Lent, Vice Chairman Cook, Senators Nichols, Carlson, Burtenshaw, Zito, Ward-Engelking, and Semmelroth
- ABSENT/ EXCUSED:** Senator Woodward
- 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 3:04 p.m.
- MINUTES APPROVAL:** **Senator Ward-Engelking** moved to approve the Minutes of January 26, 2026. **Senator Semmelroth** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.
- MINUTES APPROVAL:** **Senator Carlson** moved to approve the Minutes of January 27, 2026. **Senator Burtenshaw** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.
- PRESENTATION:** **Jeff Simmons**, Superintendent of Idaho Digital Learning Alliance (IDLA), presented the IDLA Annual Report. IDLA was created in 2002 to provide supplemental learning opportunities. IDLA was available to any student in the state and provided a wide variety of classes. **Mr. Simmons** stated that enrollment had grown in the last ten years. IDLA had innovated by creating a free, open content catalog and was investigating how to integrate artificial intelligence (AI) into the curriculum. IDLA was funded by peer enrollment and a small fee from families. **Anthony Butler**, Superintendent of Cambridge School District, continued the presentation on how students in the Cambridge School District had utilized IDLA. IDLA was used to keep students on track to graduate.
- DISCUSSION:** **Senator Ward-Engelking** asked if IDLA teachers were certified. **Mr. Simmons** answered yes. **Senator Ward-Engelking** asked if the teachers received health care benefits. **Mr. Simmons** responded that IDLA teachers were part-time so they did not receive health care benefits. **Senator Semmelroth** asked what cost saving efforts they had made. **Mr. Simmons** answered that they reduced course fees and waived fees for students in dual enrollment. **Senator Semmelroth** asked how the cost savings compared to the private market. **Mr. Simmons** responded that he didn't have the prices for private programs but they could be similar to the peer enrollment price. **Senator Nichols** asked how student performance and teacher effectiveness were evaluated. **Mr. Simmons** answered that students were assessed through a final proctored exam and various assessment models throughout the course. **Senator Nichols** asked how teachers were paid. **Mr. Simmons** responded that it was from the money they received through enrollment. **Senator Ward-Engelking** asked about cuts to IDLA. **Mr. Simmons** answered that there was a 40 percent cut to their program which meant less staff and course offerings. **Senator Semmelroth** asked about teacher training. **Mr. Simmons** answered that they had a partnership with Boise State University for students finishing their student teaching semester. **Senator Zito** asked how IDLA planned to integrate AI into class materials. **Mr. Simmons** responded that IDLA was examining the ethics of AI in the classroom. **Senator Cook** gave a brief overview of how **S 1225** would help teachers use AI as a tool rather than replace them.

**Senator Carlson** asked about the IDLA name change. **Mr. Simmons** answered that it changed from the Idaho Digital Learning Academy to the Idaho Digital Learning Alliance because it was a tool for schools to use and not a school itself. He noted that this change was not in Idaho Code. **Senator Carlson** asked how IDLA planned to provide services with budget cuts. **Mr. Simmons** mentioned that there were impacts but they tried to protect rural schools.

**Senator Carlson** asked if there were other organizations that offered classes online. **Mr. Butler** responded that some students took classes through colleges but that most took them through IDLA. **Senator Carlson** asked if students could take courses through BYU-Idaho and receive college credit. **Mr. Butler** answered that he did have one student utilizing this option but it was up to local board policy.

**S 1234**

**Education – Amends existing law to provide for Lewis-Clark State University.**

**Senator Carlson** introduced **Dr. Cynthia Pemberton**, President of Lewis-Clark State College (LCSC), to present to the Committee on how this bill would impact LCSC. **President Pemberton** noted that the name change would not alter the school's mission or focus but identified what the institution already was. LCSC was often overlooked because people thought it was a two-year school but LCSC offered two-year, four-year, and graduate degrees. There was a one time cost of \$50,000 which was absorbed into the school's existing budget. **Senator Carlson** closed that her biggest concern was cost but it was only a bill to change the name.

**MOTION:**

**Senator Cook** moved to send the bill to the floor with a **do pass** recommendation. **Senator Nichols** seconded the motion. The motion passed by **voice vote**.

**ADJOURNED:**

There being no further business at this time, **Chairman Lent** adjourned the meeting at 3:59 p.m.

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Senator Lent  
Chair

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Lauren Young  
Secretary