# Minutes of the Colorado Commission on Higher Education Meeting

## **February 6, 2009**

Chairman James Polsfut called the meeting to order at 1:30 pm.

Commissioners James Polsfut, Hereford Percy, Jill Brake, BJ Scott, Michael Plachy, Happy Haynes, Richard Ramirez, Greg Stevinson, Edward Robinson, Patricia Pacey and Larry Beckner were in attendance. Also in attendance were Advisory Committee members Donna Theimer, Toni Larson, Jack Wylie, Phil Fox and Representative Nancy Todd.

Commissioner Beckner moved to approve the minutes of the January 9, 2009 meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Haynes and unanimously passed.

Dr. Steve Jordan, President of Metropolitan State College of Denver (MSCD), welcomed the Commission to the Auraria campus. He discussed the state funding situation for MSCD and other four-year institutions in Colorado, suggesting that the state consider not only the national peer institutions that are being used for the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS) study but also the disparity among institutions within the state. Dr. Jordan said he hopes for a more level playing field once the state moves out of the current recession.

**Chair Report:** Chairman Polsfut reported that he attended a meeting co-convened by the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) and the Colorado Department of Higher Education (DHE) on January 27, 2009 under the so-called Preschool to Postsecondary Alignment Act, or SB212. He described the meeting as productive and suggested it is well worth the time for Commissioners to attend future SB212 meetings.

**Public Comment:** Mr. George Walker of Denver stated his support for Dr. Jordan's commitment to enrolling non-traditional students at MSCD. He informed the Commission that he had invited the Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, to participate via teleconference in the Commission meeting.

### **INFORMATION ITEM**

**Proposed Legislation Authorizing Metropolitan State College of Denver to Offer Graduate Programs** – Dr. Julie Carnahan, Chief Academic Officer, presented MSCD's proposed change to its authorizing statute to allow the college to offer master degree level programs. Dr. Steve Jordan spoke of the need for master degree programs especially if the institution is to become a Hispanic Serving Institute. He explained that master degree programs in an urban environment will give students an opportunity to participate in professional programs without having to travel to another institution, such as the University of Colorado-Boulder. The three master's degrees MSCD is interested in offering are in teacher education, social work and accountancy. Dr. Jordan believes these specific programs address the needs of the unban service area at this time. He hopes that MSCD will offer enrollment in the programs by fall of 2010.

Commissioner Haynes suggested the Commission support the legislation and inform legislators of the Commission's position and moved the following resolution:

"Resolved that the Colorado Commission on Higher Education supports the concept of Metropolitan State College of Denver offering Masters Degree programs in furtherance of its role and mission."

The motion was seconded by Commissioner Scott and unanimously passed.

### PRESENTATION ITEMS

**Status Report on SB212 and P-20 Council** – Dr. Carnahan reported on the Department's recent activities under Senate Bill 212, the Preschool to Postsecondary Alignment Act. She informed Commissioners of locations and dates of future meetings. Dr. Carnahan asked the Commissioners who attended the January 27<sup>th</sup> meeting to offer any feedback or suggestions to improve the format for future meetings.

Advisory Committee member Jack Wylie said he felt the January 27<sup>th</sup> meeting overall was successful but believed the discussion was very rushed. Commissioner Haynes commented that she hoped there would be more representation from the business community at future meetings. Commissioner Percy concurred that the meeting was rushed but said he found it to be very interesting. Advisory Committee member Toni Larson suggested that there be more distinction between skills needed for workforce readiness and those needed for post-secondary education.

**Legislation Update for 2009 General Assembly** – John Karakoulakis, Director of Legislative Affairs, updated the Commission on legislation introduced since the January 9, 2009 meeting. He drew the Commission's attention to Senate Bill 170 (SB170), the tuition equity bill. This bill had just been introduced and has not yet been heard by committee.

Chairman Polsfut urged the Commission to consider the following resolution regarding SB170:

"That sound principles of economics and social equity warrant that a student who has resided in Colorado for three years, graduates from a Colorado high school and who meets applicable academic admission standards should be able to attend a public college or university subject to resident tuition rates, regardless of a student's immigration status."

Commissioner Plachy moved to approve the resolution. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Percy and unanimously passed.

### **ACTION ITEMS**

**2009-2010 Student Budget Guidelines** – Celina Duran, Financial Aid Administrator, presented to the Commission the FY2009-2010 Student Budget Guidelines. She explained that the Commission annually approves budget guidelines, which are used by financial aid administrators

in determining student eligibility for aid. The guidelines include tuition, fees and books and living expenses. She said the guidelines this year include minimal increases in most areas, with the most notable change being the removal of medical insurance from the guidelines, as many campuses now offer insurance funded through student fees.

Commissioner Brake moved to approve the student budget guidelines. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Robinson and unanimously passed.

HEAR 2010 School District Waivers – Dr. Carnahan presented requests received from three school districts for a waiver from the 2010 Higher Education Admission Requirements (HEAR). She reminded Commissioners that DHE staff had been directed by the Commission to develop a process jointly with the Department of Education to permit school districts to apply for such a waiver. Weldon Valley School District RE-20J School Board, the Colorado School for the Deaf and the Blind Board of Trustees and the Rocky Ford School District R2 School Board all passed resolutions requesting waivers of different parts of HEAR 2010.

Commissioner Robinson moved to approve the three waiver requests. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Plachy and unanimously passed.

**2009-2010 Budget Update; Consideration of Commission Resolution** – Diane Lindner, Chief Financial Officer, reported to the Commission on the Governor's budget balancing plan and its impact on higher education. The plan for the current fiscal year balances to a General Fund revenue shortfall of \$631.9 million; the plan includes contingencies should the shortfall be either more or less than the projection. The Governor's proposed balancing plan impacts higher education in four major areas: 1) transfers into the Higher Education and Maintenance Reserve fund and then out of that Fund into the General Fund to mitigate cuts to higher education; 2) formulaic reductions for Governing Boards of higher education institutions; 3) targeted reductions to mitigate formulaic reductions; and 4) freezing certain capital construction projects.

The Commission considered a draft resolution concerning tuition flexibility. Kay Norton, President of the University of Northern Colorado, addressed the Commission on the importance of allowing tuition and regulatory flexibility in today's market. After discussion the conclusion of the draft resolution was revised to read:

Now, therefore, the Colorado Commission on Higher Education Resolves: That the governing boards of the state's public institutions of higher education should be allowed greater flexibility and discretion to set tuition levels necessary to address the current economic circumstances and the pending reductions in state support, provided affordability and access are addressed for all resident students in accordance with an institution's role, mission and admissions standards.

Commission Haynes moved to approve the resolution. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Scott and unanimously passed.

Commissioner Percy moved to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Stevinson. The meeting was adjourned at 3:45 pm.