

REPORT OF MINUTES

BOARD OF TRUSTEES SPECIAL MEETING

BAY de NOC COMMUNITY COLLEGE
Student Center Building, Room 525
Escanaba, MI

January 20, 2023

President Coleman welcomed trustees, U.P. legislators and legislative staff members. The luncheon began with introductions at 12 p.m. ET.

Members Present: Steve Davis, Joy Hopkins, Wendy Middaugh, Terri Mileski

Members Absent: Tom Butch, Eric Lundin, Nick Chenier

Administration: Laura Coleman

Guests: Sen. Ed McBroom
Rep. Dave Prestin
Rep. Jenn Hill
Abby Wallace, MI Environmental Council Energy & Climate Policy Coordinator
Jay Gage, U.P. Regional Manager for Sen. Stabenow
Aubrey Moore, U.P. Regional Director for Sen. Peters
Rich Rossway, U.P. District Rep. for Rep. Bergman

Media: Craig Woerpel, WDBC

Recorder: Laura Johnson, Assistant Board Secretary

The luncheon was held to share information specific to community colleges and discuss legislative issues of concern to Bay College with the U.P. legislators and representatives. Dr. Coleman discussed Bay College's increased enrollment of part-time students due to the MI Reconnect tuition assistance program and the College's ability to maintain their budget despite continued decreases in annual state appropriations funding.

Items discussed:

- *Funding for Student Housing:* Dr. Coleman expressed concern that the \$6 million earmarked for each community college from state revenue is being reduced. Bay anticipates using this funding to build an additional 52-bed student housing unit. The initial project cost was \$4.5 million, which is now at \$6.5 million as funding continues to be delayed. The College is exploring partial funding from a USDA loan but needs assistance moving the state application forward. Jay Gage offered to reach out to a contact for assistance. If funding is approved through state capital outlay funds, the

College would not need to provide a 50/50 funding match. Campus housing also helps relieve the housing shortage in the community.

- *Community College Funding:* State appropriations supported 52% of Bay's budget in 2000 compared to 29% in 2021. Dr. Coleman advocated for additional funding from the State. Sen. McBroom stated that overall, 80% of the land in the U.P. is owned by government or non-profit entities so tax revenue in the U.P. is much lower compared to what community colleges receive in the Lower Peninsula. Rich Rossway and Rep. Prestin introduced discussion about opportunities for millage revenue from additional counties to increase Bay's tax revenue and services.
- *Student Mental Health Dedicated Funding:* The Michigan Community College Association (MCCA) suggested dedicated funding from the State for student mental health. Dr. Coleman encouraged additional funding for mental health be disbursed to school's general funds because support for mental health is a current expense. Rep. Hill stated that schools can expect to hear more about mental health support because legislators are passionate about this issue and elevating it through a dedicated behavioral health committee.

Sen. McBroom discussed work underway at the state and federal levels to provide in-patient mental health care with local hospitals and change the initial county system which is no longer functional.

- *House Higher Education Policy Committee:* Rep. Hill advised that the new House Higher Education Policy Committee will meet for the first time on February 8. The Chair, Rep. Carol Glanville, extended an invitation to meet with Dr. Coleman while she is in Lansing on February 8, to discuss the work of the committee. Rep. Hill shared bio information for Chair Glanville and V. Chair Rep. Rheingans whose backgrounds include work with K12s and community colleges. Rep. Glanville is very interested in smoothing the transition from K12 to all types of lifelong learning, including certificate and technical skills based credentials, to support student and employer needs.
- *MI Reconnect:* Dr. Coleman conveyed that the MI Reconnect program helped maintain Bay's enrollment throughout the pandemic and is a valuable opportunity for adult students who likely would not return to college. MI Reconnect students made up 13% of Bay's Fall 2022 enrollment. The new MI Reconnect bill imposes a 50% completion rate. Bay's 2017 completion rate was 63% and 60% for 2018, which includes students who experienced the pandemic. Administration expects a further decline in the completion rate due to the pandemic. The bill also expects an annual 3% increase in the completion rate if that rate drops below 50%. Ultimately, this would force community colleges to redistrict applicants to the program because funding reimbursement would be withheld if the completion rates cannot be maintained. Dr. Coleman added another concern is that the program does not cover out of district or out of state tuition rates and this impacts many community college students due to the large geographic area many colleges serve.

The possibility of moving the minimum age requirement to 21 is appealing, however, students in this age group often stop-out and start multiple times which can hurt the College's completion rate and potential program reimbursement.

Rep. Hill requested Dr. Coleman talk to her colleagues about whether MI Reconnect funding should remain under the State's LEO budget or move to the State's education budget and reply to her.

Higher education funding from the State has shifted from the schools to the students. Dr. Coleman stated that when the schools do not directly receive the funding, it reduces the operating budget which ultimately increases tuition.

- *Billerud – Escanaba*: Dr. Coleman urged legislators to support tax benefits for the plant upgrades at the Escanaba Billerud mill. The entire U.P. depends on the mill as a major employer and its economic impact. Billerud is also a training partner with Bay College.
- *Presidential Search*: Trustees Steve Davis and Joy Hopkins responded to Aubrey Moore about the presidential search, that the process is in the solicitation phase with applications and nominations due March 1 for priority consideration. Sen. McBroom added that Bay has high visibility in the community and the U.P. and is a remarkable place to be a community college president.
- *Emergency First Responder Crisis*: Rep. Prestin discussed the profound crisis all rural areas, especially the U.P., are facing due to emergency first responder burn-out and state and federal training requirements. Ways Bay could help address local training needs were discussed with Rep. Prestin and Sen. McBroom.

The meeting ended at 2 p.m. ET.

Laura L. Johnson
Assistant Board Secretary

Completion
Date:

Approval Date:

Joy E. Hopkins
Chair

Approval Date: