



West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission

Higher Education
News Clippings

Week of October 11, 2009



October 15, 2009

Higher ed to change funding Commission plan shifts burden to state

BY DAVID BEARD The Dominion Post

CHARLESTON — The Higher Education Policy Commission (HEPC) continues working to revamp higher education funding, and Chancellor Brian Noland gave legislators a “first blush” look at what’s to come.

Noland returned to the Capitol this week for another appearance before the Legislative Oversight Commission on Education Accountability.

The current system, Noland said, is “base plus,” meaning funding is built on last year’s level, adjusted for inflation and may include money for such things as raises.

The problem, he previously said, is the previous year’s funding wasn’t developed based on any type of formal policy, so it doesn’t reflect the types of students or the types of courses they’re enrolled in. It also doesn’t recognize institutions whose enrollments increased or decreased.

The new approach will be a funding formula based on “institutional enrollment at the course level,” according to the report he presented to the commission Tuesday during interims.

Key components of the new formula:

It’s based on enrollment and can flex with changes up or down. Noland previously said this would benefit WVU, which has seen a steady increase in enrollment every school year.

It “recognizes that some disciplines cost more to teach than others and acknowledges these costs” in weighted calculations.

Weighted calculations focus on student retention by giving more weight to upper level classes. “This takes the onus off just recruiting” new students, Noland said, and gives value to transfer students.

Seeks to transfer the burden of funding construction and capital plans to the state, so institutions can focus on their operating budgets.

An important aspect of the plan, Noland said, is shifting the cost burden. Right now, university budgets are derived from 68 percent student funding (tuition and fees) and 32 percent state funding. His goal is to reach a 50/50 split for most institutions, though WVU, with a significant out-of-state population, would be about 60/40.

A chart showed some sample estimated funding proposals under the new scenario. In the example, WVU would receive \$360 million, with \$145 million coming from the

state and \$215 million from students. Fairmont State would receive \$34.3 million, with \$17.2 million from the state and \$17.1 million from students.

Noland said his office plans to have a full proposal ready for the HEPC when it meets in November. There are a few portions of the plan left to tweak — one being how to encourage and account for course completion over simple enrollment, since some students drop courses. He would like to have everything ready to bring a funding request before the Legislature for its Fiscal Year 2012 budget.

Dan Kim, WVU spokesman, provided this comment regarding Noland's plans: "West Virginia University welcomes the opportunity to continue working with Chancellor Noland on increasing funding for higher education. Investment in higher education generates very positive returns for the state."

Fairmont State did not respond to requests for comment in time for this report.

Nearly 80 percent of Promise grads living in state

By Phil Kabler, Staff writer

CHARLESTON, W.Va. -- A survey of recent Promise scholarship graduates found that nearly 80 percent have remained in West Virginia after earning their bachelor's degrees, lawmakers were told Tuesday.

The survey by West Virginia University's Bureau of Business and Economic Research found that in 2008, 59 percent of the 3,692 Promise scholars who graduated between 2005 to 2007 were employed in West Virginia -- compared to 68 percent of all in-state students who graduated during that period.

Another 20 percent of Promise graduates were enrolled in graduate school in West Virginia, the survey found.

Delegate John Doyle, D-Jefferson, said Tuesday he believes the survey underreports the numbers of Promise graduates living in West Virginia. He said it leaves out the large numbers of graduates who live in the Eastern Panhandle but work in the Washington, D.C., metro area.

"They live here, but they work in Maryland, Virginia and the District of Columbia," he said. "I'm thinking, perhaps, if you factor that in, Promise scholars don't have a smaller percentage than regular graduates staying in West Virginia."

Retention of Promise scholars has been a topic of debate since the West Virginia Lottery-funded scholarship program was launched in 2002.

In 2008, Gov. Joe Manchin proposed requiring Promise graduates who move out-of-state to repay a portion of their scholarships, but the Legislature quickly rejected the so-called "claw back" proposal.

Also Tuesday at the Legislative Oversight Commission on Education Accountability's meeting:

State Higher Education Chancellor Brian Noland updated legislators on progress on a new funding formula for state colleges and universities.

The new funding formula would be based on courses, not enrollment, he said: "It recognizes that some courses are more expensive to offer than others."

Besides providing higher funding per course in fields such as engineering and health sciences, the formula provides higher funding for upper-level courses than for freshmen courses.

"It puts the incentive on institutions for retention of students and to attract transfers," he said.

Noland hopes to have the new funding formula in place for the 2010-11 budget year.

A status report on funding for the "Bucks for Brains" Research Trust Fund shows that both Marshall and West Virginia universities have struggled in the first year of the program to raise contributions necessary to draw down the state's allotment of \$50 million in matching funds for high-tech research efforts.

WVU has raised about \$3.3 million, or close to 10 percent of the \$35 million available in state matching funds.

Marshall to date has raised about \$465,000, or about 3 percent of the \$15 million available in matching funds.

"They're the ones who told us they could get theirs first," noted Senate Education Chairman Robert Plymale, D-Wayne.



October 14, 2009

Teaming to Win showcase for small business, economic growth

Just a little more than a decade ago, the land where the I-79 High Technology Park is now was just the rolling fields of a family farm. Now there's more than 721,000 square feet of class-A office and research space.

When it began, the West Virginia High Technology Consortium was made up of six businesses. Now there are more than 200 affiliate businesses. There are more than 1,200 people employed there, and officials are expecting the number to reach 2,000 in the next two years.

What a perfect venue for the 20th anniversary of the Teaming to Win conference, which is being held today and Thursday in Fairmont.

For 20 years, business people in North Central West Virginia have gotten together each fall in an effort to show the rest of the world the best we have to offer. And this time, some of the "best" is right here in North Central West Virginia.

The premier event for West Virginia's business community began as a big networking forum, a way to help small businesses gain exposure and give them a place to interact with other companies and government agencies.

Teaming to Win is an effort to facilitate educational activities and communication between small businesses and other entities. Small businesses get the opportunity to see what everybody around them is doing and often team up because of introductions made at the conference. Around 400 to 500 people from across the state generally attend Teaming to Win each year.

And imagine the kind of impression those hundreds of visitors will get as they converge on the high-tech park, a perfect illustration of economic diversification. Deep in recession, this area found new life and new growth through the high-technology sector.

"With it being the 20th anniversary, we figured it's a very good time to focus on and showcase the research park," said event co-director Bob Wentz. "(Teaming to Win) is for small businesses, but it also has a high-tech flavor to it."

Highlights of the two-day event will be a panel discussion on regional economic diversification with Congressman Alan B. Mollohan, exhibits and technology demonstrations. Speakers will include West Virginia University President James Clements, Fairmont State University President Thomas Krepel and West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission Chancellor Brian Noland, who will speak on higher education and workforce development.

And guests will get a glimpse of the stars, too. Astronaut John M. Grunsfeld will speak on the Hubble telescope Thursday. And the conference will end with keynote speaker Lori B. Garver, NASA deputy administrator.

This event is the perfect opportunity to not only showcase small business, but to demonstrate how an area can successfully expand its economy and focus on a new sector.



October 13, 2009

Clements: 100 more profs by '12 Says WVU is fairing well in bad economy

BY JIM BISSETT For The Dominion Post

Most of the numbers WVU President James Clements cited during his first State of the University address in Morgantown on Monday afternoon had dollar signs in the front and lots of zeros at the back.

The administrator, who has been on the job just 15 weeks, crunched those numbers to let faculty know that WVU was faring pretty well, all things considered, in a national economy that's been on shaky ground over the past several months.

Speaking before a packed room at the National Research Center for Coal and Energy on the Evansdale campus, Clements trumpeted the more than \$150 million in research dollars pulled down by faculty over fiscal year 2008.

And he heaped accolades on alumni and other supporters who kicked in \$55 million to the WVU Foundation Inc., the university's private fundraising arm, during that same year.

Same deal for the researchers in WVU's landmark Forensic and Investigative Sciences Program and Forensic Science Initiative: They landed two grants totaling close to \$1 million that they'll use to improve evidence-collecting technology employed by the FBI at crime scenes across the country.

The number that may have gotten the biggest audience response, though, was a proposed offering more about student capital than the cost ledger.

Clements told his audience he wants to hire 100 professors over the next three years to help WVU meet the classroom demands of an ever increasing enrollment.

"And that's 100, at the minimum," he said. "When I got here, I originally thought our faculty-to-student ratio was 23-to-1. I was wrong. It's more like 27-to-1, and that's simply too high."

That goal, which he said could be met through a "strategic reallocation" of monies, was just part of the road map presented during his address.

Clements, who shed his suit coat and talked for about 50 minutes, outlined seven key areas he said the university needs to focus on for the next 10 years. Academic and faculty quality, the first, is where the hiring proposal comes in.

The others are research, undergraduate experience and education, graduate education, WVU's impact on the state of West Virginia, health care and multiculturalism and globalization.

When Clements took office June 30, he also launched a Web survey entitled Share the Vision, which is still running and open to students, faculty, employees and donors of the state's flagship university.

The words projected on a screen behind the podium during his talk were the words plucked from the 600 responses to date, he said.

"Remember the words you used to describe this university," he said. "Life-changing, committed, innovative, resilient, affordable. These are your words, and this is our university. We can make it what we want it to be."

Across West Virginia, Clements said, WVU already returns \$20 to state coffers for every \$1 invested in a university program.

WVU also annually gives around \$70 million in medical care for free, he said — and that doesn't count the students and physicians who staff free clinics in the state's more rural locales.

"Now, it's time to see if we have the right structure for the future," he said. "I don't have all the answers. Let me know what's missing."

WVU's other president, Student Government leader Jason Zuccari, likes that open-eared philosophy, he said.

Zuccari, a multidisciplinary senior from McLean, Va., appreciates that Clements wants to officially fund club sports, like rugby and rowing, he said.

"That's huge," Zuccari said. "He's really listening. I think he's doing a great job."

Nigel Clark, who chairs WVU's Faculty Senate, said he's excited by the prospect of having 100 new colleagues by 2012 — not that it won't be a tough task to complete.

"Funding new faculty is a difficult business," said Clark, who hopes new salaries can be met via tuition dollars and research dollars down the line.

Jo Morrow, however, wanted to hear more about dollars directed to WVU's classified staff employees — the office workers and service workers across all the university's campuses and disciplines.

Morrow, who heads Staff Council, the advocacy group for those employees, called Clements' remarks "encouraging" — even if they didn't quite hit the mark for her.

"He hasn't been here long enough to know our history and how much we haven't been paid over the years," Morrow said. "We're still getting paid on the 2001 salary schedule. All the money we've missed out on from pay raises we didn't get is affecting our retirement. For us, the future is now."

MU provost outlines new retention plan

BILL ROSENBERGER, The Herald-Dispatch

HUNTINGTON -- Mandatory advising, overhauling the core curriculum and improving communication are all part of Marshall University's plan to improve student retention rates.

The full scope of the year-long project was outlined Thursday by Provost Gayle Ormiston at the university's Board of Governors meeting.

The retention plan and its four components, which also includes a better use of student assessment, is meant to improve enrollment from year to year and help more students graduate within six years.

Ormiston said things are off to a good start thanks to the strong recruiting effort that led to an 11.5 percent increase in new freshmen enrollment this fall. The enrollment of 1,862 first-time freshmen is the highest since 2004.

"The real point we need to begin with in our student retention efforts toward student success begins with our recruitment efforts," Ormiston said

University officials have a goal of 2,000 first-year students by 2012 and could reach it with a 7 percent increase in 2010.

But they also have lofty goals for retention. The hope is that 74 percent, or 1,397, of this year's freshmen class will return next fall. If reached, it would be the highest freshmen retention since 2005 when it was 73.1 percent.

Although Marshall at 70 percent retention is higher than the 64 percent national average, President Stephen Kopp wants to see it reach 80 percent. Officials also want to improve Marshall's rank of 15th out of 21 in its peer institution group. Since 2004, the freshmen retention rate has ranged from 70.9 percent to 73.1 percent.

The retention plan focuses on four areas that university strategists believe are the keys to decreasing the number of students who don't return after their first, second, third and even fourth year. The goal is to get as many possible to stay at Marshall and earn a degree.

The first area of emphasis, which Ormiston said is supported by national research, is advising. This would include a Week of Welcome for first-year students that runs from Wednesday through Sunday before classes begin Monday each August. Also in the works is an overnight orientation program for students and parents.

A central advising center also will be developed, with a required student advising policy going into effect for all students by next year. Ormiston and the recruiting and retention committee also are looking through the academic plans for each major and finding ways to connect students to the Career Services office.

The second key is overhauling the general education curriculum that all students take. More than three years ago, faculty started looking at creating a new core curriculum. Ormiston said that will make it easier for students who change majors.

Three of the roughly 11 classes (35 credits) are being created to focus on critical-thinking skills and the common book reading that was put in place two years ago. The hope is that the core curriculum lays a foundation that will lead to a successful capstone project upon graduation. A committee, he said, also is developing an e-portfolio system.

The third part of the plan is assessment. This is a tool that will help university officials gauge student interests, student success and, ultimately, whether Marshall is doing all it can to ensure students are getting what they want and need out of the school.

Marshall is currently one of three West Virginia universities piloting MAP-WORKS, a program designed to identify at-risk students during their first year. More than 1,300 freshmen have taken the survey, and most responded that they are committed to earning a degree and doing it at Marshall.

The final part of the plan is improving communication, which Ormiston said is probably the university's weakest link. Revamping it means developing a centralized calendar system, reviewing the student activities culture on campus and utilizing targeted announcements to students. With the new campuswide system that can alert segmented groups, Ormiston said students can be made aware of a variety of things, such as information notes and upcoming activities.

There is a downside to major growth at Marshall. Ormiston said if the recruiting efforts and retention plan work as intended, Marshall will have a problem with physical space needs.

"There is a need for a new instructional classroom building and renovations in current buildings," he said. "We need more flex space."

Faculty representative Larry Stickler also said that many classrooms need upgraded for 21st century learning capabilities, with such items as digital projectors, screens and computers.

But having more students also means more revenue that the university could use for such projects and to increase staff pay. Ormiston showed that of the 1,659 full-time freshmen enrolled in the fall of 2007, 1,176 returned the following fall. If Marshall had been able to keep 60 of those students -- approximately an additional 3.1 percent -- through graduation, it would generate an additional \$1.37 million in tuition and fees. Of that, \$949,000 would be discretionary revenue.

"We lost, over a six-year period, one class, \$7 million in discretionary revenue and \$10 million including fees," Kopp said. "These are not trivial numbers we're looking at."

"The retention effort has a direct effect on the financial picture of the university as well as the ability to recruit staff and faculty and renovate buildings," Kopp added.

Kopp has repeatedly said that enrollment and retention are vital to the university's fiscal success, especially with state appropriations expected to level off or possibly decrease. Board member Dale Lowther said he'd like to investigate what private colleges and

universities are doing and have done to ensure recruiting and retention efforts are successful.

Kopp said such research is important because state-funded higher education schools aren't far from having to implement similar strategies.

"We have to operate more like a private institution than a public institution because we're becoming more like a private institution every day," Kopp said.

October 14, 2009

Audit finds tax-free vehicles among W.Va. officials

By Phil Kabler, Staff writer

CHARLESTON, W.Va -- Nearly 500 state employees used state vehicles to commute to and from work in 2008, but 90 of them failed to report the vehicle as a taxable benefit, a legislative audit released Wednesday shows.

Those who didn't report their use of state vehicles as income include three agency heads -- state Agriculture Commissioner Gus Douglas, state Treasurer John Perdue and Bluefield State College President Albert Walker, auditors found.

West Virginia spends \$60 million to \$70 million a year to operate its fleet of nearly 7,000 vehicles -- including \$24 million for gasoline alone in 2008 -- but has no effective means to monitor employees' use of the vehicles, according to the audit.

Numerous other state employees significantly under-reported the value of their use of state vehicles.

Internal Revenue Service rules allow employees to calculate a commuting value of \$3 per workday -- if the vehicle is used at least 50 percent of the time for business purposes. However, if business use is less than 50 percent, the IRS requires that the reportable income be increased to the lease value of the vehicle.

The audit found many instances of state vehicles used primarily for non-business mileage -- including two Miners' Health, Safety and Training staffers with 22,536 and 27,936 miles of personal usage -- reported at only the \$3 a day commuting value.

That meant they were reporting taxable income of several hundred dollars for the year - not the several thousand dollars of lease value they should have reported, as required by the IRS.

"This raises a policy question: Why are we providing cars to individuals basically to do nothing but commute?" legislative manager Aaron Allred told the legislative Post-Audits Committee.

"There's nothing in state law or rules that we could find that would prevent a state agency from giving an employee a car to commute," he said.

The Fleet Management Division of the Department of Administration has stricter rules for employees' use of state vehicles -- but accounts for only 1,700 of the 6,838 vehicles licensed to 88 different state agencies.

Administration Secretary Robert Ferguson told legislators that, over the years, a variety of state agencies have been authorized to operate their own vehicle fleets, including Highways, Natural Resources, Forestry, the attorney general's office, the State Police, and most higher education institutions.

"There has been an inordinate amount of paper generated since the governor took office on the pros and cons of consolidating the fleet," he said.

"I think what we're talking about here is not who's got the vehicle, but the proper reporting of personal use of the vehicle," Senate President Earl Ray Tomblin, D-Logan, said of the audit.

"I would think the governor's office would have the ability to tell department heads, "Here's the federal law -- I want you to follow it," Tomblin said.

University in Charles Town Expands With \$8M Center **American Public University has broken ground on its new Academic Center.**

Story by Christine Miller Ford

CHARLES TOWN -- Seven years after American Public University relocated to the Eastern Panhandle from Northern Virginia, the online school has broken ground on a four-story, \$8 million building that will become its Academic Center.

“The new space will serve our full-time faculty, deans, provost and president — with room for 140 employees in all,” said Christopher L. Symanoskie, the school’s director of corporate communications. “On the first floor we’ll have a library with the largest or one of the largest collections of books on military history anywhere.”

Once the new building is complete — probably in late 2010 or 2011 — American Public University will occupy more than 100,000 square feet of space in Charles Town.

“Right now, we’re using 10 buildings, and we’ve been responsible for a lot of revitalization and restoration all over downtown,” Symanoskie said. “With the new Academic Center, we’ll have a true campus-like atmosphere.”

The school began in Manassas, Va., in 1991 when a retired Marine Corps leader sought to create a university centered on military matters. But the scope of the university soon grew, Symanoskie said.

Today, American Public University offers 76 degree programs, including courses of study in homeland security, emergency preparedness and history.

The school’s enrollment stands at 53,000 and students come from every state in the nation as well as dozens of countries outside the United States to pursue associate, bachelor’s and master’s degrees, said Symanoskie.

This week’s groundbreaking ceremony at 330 N. George St. included the unveiling of the new building’s design as well as remarks from the school’s president, Wallace Boston.

Symanoskie said when the school moved to Charles Town it had just a single building, eight employees and about 13,000 students worldwide compared to the school’s current work force of 240 in offices scattered throughout 10 buildings.

The school has taken bids for the Academic Center project and will decide on a construction company soon, Symanoskie said.