

MINUTES
STATE BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION
Regular Meeting
May 22, 2025

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting of the State Board of Higher Education (Board) was convened in-person at 607 South Drive, Harrisburg, PA 17120, and virtually via MS Teams on Thursday, May 22, 2025. Public notice of the meeting was made in accordance with the Sunshine Act. The meeting was called to order at 1:00 p.m. by Dr. Cynthia Shapira, Chair.

II. ROLL CALL

Ms. Lubna Mian, Chief of Staff, performed the roll call. A quorum of members was present as follows:

Ms. Diane Acri (Designee for Hon. Jesse Topper)
Dr. Brenda Allen
Dr. Ann Bieber
Hon. Jay Costa
Ms. Marylouise Esten
Ms. Angela Fitterer (Designee for Dr. Carrie Rowe)
Hon. Wayne Langerholc
Dr. Kara Laskowski
Mr. Kenneth Long

Dr. Cheryl McConnell
Hon. Peter Schweyer
Dr. Cynthia Shapira
Ms. Andrea Shirk
Dr. Michael Wade Smith
Ms. Nancy Walker
Mr. Michael G. Warfel
Mr. Kevin Washo
Ms. Bobbie Jo Zapor

Absent: Dr. Pedro Rivera

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion to approve the minutes of the April 24, 2025, meeting was made by Mr. Warfel and Dr. Wade Smith.

VOTE: All were in favor as indicated by unanimous voice vote.

IV. PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no public comments.

V. REMARKS BY THE CHAIR

Dr. Shapira began the meeting with an update on the strategic planning process and thanked the Board members for their dedication to the process, especially during the regional hearings held across the Commonwealth from February through April. She then provided a brief update on internal deadlines, noting that Board approval will be required before posting the draft plan for public comment. Dr. Shapira invited Dr. Shaw to share the proposed timeline for the strategic plan review and approval. Once approved, the plan will be posted on the Board's website.

Dr. Shapira also announced that student member Mr. Sean Eden, Board representative for the Pennsylvania State University, is graduating and will be rotating off the Board. She thanked Mr. Eden for his service to the Board and to the Bylaws Committee. The Governor will appoint a new member.

Dr. Shapira reported that the work of the Bylaws Committee had been accomplished with the approval of its recommended bylaws at the April meeting. With the addition of the Board to the Governor's Economic Development Strategy Group and the need for strong Board involvement in this area, Dr. Shapira announced the convening of an ad hoc Economic and Workforce Development Committee to provide support and guidance to the Board staff. Members will be Ms. Andrea Shirk, Dr. Ann Bieber, Dr. Pedro Rivera, and Ms. Nancy Walker.

VI. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT

Dr. Shaw introduced new staff member Mr. Steve Esack, director of public and legislative affairs.

VII. UPDATE ON COMMITTEES

Dr. Shapira introduced the respective committee chairs and requested their reports, holding the Transfer of Authority Committee's report to later in the meeting.

Postsecondary Data

Chair: Mr. Kenneth Long

Mr. Long reported that the committee continues to meet monthly, focusing on two interrelated tasks: development of a data consideration memo for the Board and alignment with the upcoming strategic plan.

Performance-Based Funding Council

Chair: Hon. Jesse Topper

Ms. Diane Aciri, on behalf of Rep. Topper, reported that the Council met on May 5 and unanimously adopted six recommendations, which are available in its [Final Report](#) on the Council's website.

IX. DISCUSSION AND VOTE ON APPROVING BOARD PARTICIPATION IN RURAL TALENT LAB AND CBEN INITIATIVES.

- A. Dr. Greg Kienzl, Director of Information & Strategic Analysis, led the presentation and discussion of the Rural Talent Lab (RTL) proposal. The RTL is administered by the State Higher Education Executive Officers Association, with five states to be selected to receive up to \$125,000 in technical assistance to develop a statewide plan to attract and develop rural talent and implement at least four middle-skills credential pathways. In addition to the Board, the partnership would include six community colleges, the PA Department of Education, PA Department of Labor & Industry, the Center for Rural PA, and the PA Commission for Community Colleges. The proposal requires Board approval to move forward.

A motion to approve the Board and staff's participation in the RTL grant opportunity was made by Dr. Cheryl McConnell and seconded by Mr. Kevin Washo.

VOTE: All were in favor as indicated by unanimous voice vote, with one abstention by Hon. Nancy Walker.

A follow-up motion to include authority of the Executive Director to negotiate and execute any agreements to participate in this initiative was made by Dr. McConnell, seconded by Mr. Washo.

VOTE: All were in favor as indicated by unanimous voice vote, with one abstention by Hon. Nancy Walker.

- B. Ms. Carrie Amann, Director of Economic and Workforce Development, presented and led discussion on the Skills Validation Competency-Based Education Network (CBEN), a six-month initiative funded by the Walmart Foundation to engage cross-sector partners in the development of a statewide framework for engaging employers and developing competency-based education that connects with workforce needs. This is a national program to encourage knowledge sharing and coordination among states across the country.

IX. DISCUSSION AND VOTE ON TRANSFER OF AUTHORITY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

Dr. Ann Bieber, Committee Chair, reported that the committee met on April 29 and May 15, as well as with the State Board of Education on May 8. The Board of Education agreed that its powers and duties focused solely on higher education should be transferred to the State Board of Higher Education.

Dr. Bieber offered the committee's draft final report and made a motion for the Board to adopt the following recommendations:

1. Make technical amendments to Article XIX-A of the School Code.
2. Eliminate the State Board of Education's Master Plan for Higher Education.
3. Transfer general higher education policy matters from the State Board of Education to the State Board of Higher Education.
4. Transfer specific powers of the State Board of Education's Council on Higher Education under §2604-B(c) of the School Code to the State Board of Higher Education.
5. Transfer specific powers of the State Board of Education under §2603-B(d) of the School Code to the State Board of Higher Education.
6. Establish a joint committee composed of State Board of Higher Education and State Board of Education members to facilitate the alignment of K-12 and postsecondary education policies.
7. Reconvene the State Board of Higher Education Transfer of Authority Committee to make additional amendments as needed.
8. Direct staff of the State Board of Higher Education to finalize the report for submission to the Governor and the General Assembly, and to take any further actions necessary to implement the above recommendations, including preparing legislation to implement recommendations 1-5.

The motion was seconded by Dr. Brenda Allen.

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. Kenneth Long	Yes
Dr. Cynthia Shapira	Yes
Dr. Ann Bieber	Yes
Dr. Cheryl McConnell	Yes
Dr. Michael Wade Smith	Yes
Mr. Kevin Washo	Yes
Ms. Marylouise Esten	Yes
Ms. Bobbie Jo Zapor	Yes
Dr. Kara Laskowski	Yes
Ms. Andrea Shirk	Yes

Mr. Michael Warfel	Yes
Hon. Peter Schweyer	Yes
Ms. Diane Acri (Designee for Hon. Jesse Topper	No
Ms. Gwenn Dando (Designee for Hon. Wayne Langerholc)	No
Hon. Jay Costa	Yes
Hon. Nancy Walker	Yes
Ms. Angela Fitterer (Designee for Dr. Carrie Rowe)	Yes

IX. ADJOURNMENT

With no further business, Dr. Shapira adjourned the meeting at 3:08 p.m.

NEXT MEETING: To be determined.