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# MINUTES

**Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education  
Lincoln Public Schools District Office Boardroom  
5905 O Street, Lincoln, NE  
Friday, March 14, 2025  
8:30 a.m. (CT)**

## *Public notice of meeting*

Public notice of this meeting was given by posting notice on the Commission's website; posting notice on the State of Nebraska's online public meeting calendar; e-mailing news media; and keeping a current copy of the agenda in the Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education's office, listing the date, time, and location of the meeting. A current copy of the Open Meetings Act was posted beside the table containing the documents for the meeting.

### **NOTICE OF MEETING**

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN THAT THE COORDINATING COMMISSION FOR POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION WILL HOLD A MEETING ON MARCH 14, 2025. THE MEETING WILL BEGIN AT 8:30 A.M. AND ADJOURN AT APPROXIMATELY 11:00 A.M.

AN AGENDA IS MAINTAINED IN THE COMMISSION OFFICE, 140 N. 8<sup>TH</sup> STREET, SUITE 300, LINCOLN, NEBRASKA.

DR. PAUL VON BEHREN, CHAIR

## *Meeting called to order at 8:30 a.m.*

### **CALL TO ORDER AND INTRODUCTIONS**

Chair Von Behren called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. and asked for introductions.

#### **Commissioners Present**

Tim Daniels  
Dr. Deborah Frison  
Dr. LeDonna Griffin  
Dr. Dennis Headrick  
Dannika Nelson

Molly O'Holleran  
Dr. Paul Von Behren  
Tami Weber  
W. Scott Wilson

#### **Commissioners Absent**

Mary Lauritzen

#### **Commission Staff Present**

Dr. Michael Baumgartner  
Dr. Kathleen Fimple  
Jill Heese  
J. Ritchie Morrow

Helen Pope  
Matthew Roque  
Gary Timm

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*Minutes of January 24, 2025,  
Commission meeting approved*

**APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE JANUARY 24, 2025,  
COMMISSION MEETING**

Commissioner Wilson made a motion to approve the January 24, 2025, Commission meeting minutes as written. Commissioner Weber seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken. Voting aye: Daniels, Frison, Griffin, Headrick, Nelson, O'Holleran, Von Behren, Weber, and Wilson. The motion carried.

*Minutes of February 21, 2025, Special  
Commission meeting approved*

**APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE FEBRUARY 21, 2025, SPECIAL  
COMMISSION MEETING**

Commissioner Frison made a motion to approve the February 21, 2025, Special Commission meeting minutes as written. Commissioner Headrick seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken. Voting aye: Daniels, Frison, Griffin, Headrick, Nelson, O'Holleran, Von Behren, and Weber. Commissioner Wilson abstained. The motion carried.

*Chair's Report*

**CHAIR'S REPORT**

Chair Von Behren appointed Commissioner Lauritzen to chair the Nominating Committee, along with Commissioners Weber, Headrick, Von Behren, and Nelson. The Nominating Committee will present a slate of officers to be voted upon at the May Commission meeting for 2025-2026.

Chair Von Behren reminded Commissioners that executive director biennial evaluation forms will be sent to Commissioners and will be compiled and discussed at the May Commission meeting.

*Executive Director's Report*

*Legislative update*

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

Dr. Baumgartner provided a legislative update and discussed bills of interest to the Commission. Higher education's budget hearings were held the last week of February. In addition to Dr. Baumgartner's testimony, the presidents of Doane University and Bryan College of Health Sciences testified on behalf of the Nebraska Opportunity Grant Program.

*Budget update*

Dr. Baumgartner addressed the budget stating the forecast deficit is now \$289 million for the biennium. The Appropriations Committee's preliminary budget fixed a couple of concerns we had with the Governor's budget but still includes a \$1 million decrease to the Nebraska Opportunity Grant Program.

For Community Colleges, the preliminary budget includes additional funding for the Community College Future Fund – which replaces property taxes for operations, but it does not include additional state aid for operations, nor does it include the requested additional funds for dual credit.

For the State Colleges, the preliminary budget does not include any funding increases.

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*Budget update continued*

For the University of Nebraska, the preliminary budget reduces operating appropriations by \$14.3 million in FY26 and maintains that reduced level in FY27, the same as the Governor's recommendation. It also takes away from the University \$6 million of the current \$11 million of tobacco settlement biomedical research funds annually.

For capital projects, none of the State College's new requests were funded; for the University, no new projects were funded, but the committee chairman said that \$50 million will be provided annually for the University Next Project.

*Staff activities*

Several staff members have or will be attending meetings. Matthew Roque, Capital Project & Financial Analyst, recently attended the annual meeting of the Nebraska Chapter of the American Planning Association in Kearney. J. Ritchie Morrow, Financial Aid Officer, will be attending the Nebraska Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators Meeting.

*Dr. Baumgartner spoke on recent federal level activities*

Dr. Baumgartner stated that recent activity at the federal level is taking a lot of our time. In addition to executive orders, dear colleague letters, and FAQs, mass layoffs and reorganizations at the U.S. Department of Education have potential to increase our workload. It is not clear how the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDs) will continue to function in the future. We may need to rely on the public institutions for data. The number of staff at the Office of Student Financial Aid has been reduced and may impact FAFSA filing, processing, financial composite scores, school and program approvals, and participation agreements.

*Public Hearing on Matters of General Concern*

#### **PUBLIC HEARING ON MATTERS OF GENERAL CONCERN**

There was no testimony on Matters of General Concern.

**Chair Von Behren closed the public hearing on Matters of General Concern.**

*Public Hearing on Academic Programs Committee Items*

#### **PUBLIC HEARING ON ACADEMIC PROGRAMS COMMITTEE ITEMS**

There was no testimony on Academic Programs Committee Items.

**Chair Von Behren closed the public hearing on Academic Programs Committee Items.**

*Academic Programs Committee*

*Commissioner Weber*

#### **ACADEMIC PROGRAMS COMMITTEE**

Commissioner Weber, Committee Chair, introduced Dr. Kathleen Fimple, Academic Programs Officer, to present the programs listed on the agenda.

*Metropolitan Community College – Proposal for a New Instructional Program – Health and Wellness Coaching, Career Certificate*

#### **Metropolitan Community College - Proposal for a New Instructional Program - Health and Wellness Coaching, Career Certificate**

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*Dr. Kathleen Fimple*

*Dr. Tom McDonnell and Dr. Hal Strough, Metropolitan Community College*

*Committee recommendation*

*Metropolitan Community College – Proposal for a New Instructional Program – Health and Wellness Coaching, Career Certificate, approved*

*Annual Reports from Out-of-state and Private Institutions*

*Dr. Fimple*

*Report on SARA Activities in Nebraska*

*Dr. Fimple*

*Report on Institutional Activities Related to Existing Programs*

*Reasonable and Moderate Extensions*

Dr. Fimple presented the proposal, stating that the purpose of this program is to prepare students for entry-level health and wellness careers. Approval from the National Board of Health and Wellness Coaches and an endorsement from the American Holistic Nurses Association would provide MCC students the first step to become credentialed health and wellness coaches. Dr. Fimple noted the high demand and need in this field. Metropolitan Community College representatives Dr. Tom McDonnell, Vice President for Academic Affairs, and Dr. Hal Strough, Dean of Health Professions, discussed the proposed program and answered Commissioners' questions.

Committee recommendation: That the Commission approve the Career Certificate in Health and Wellness Coaching at Metropolitan Community College.

**Commissioner Weber, on behalf of the Academic Programs Committee, moved to approve Metropolitan Community College's Proposal for a New Instructional Program – Health and Wellness Coaching, Career Certificate. A roll call was taken. Voting aye: Daniels, Frison, Griffin, Headrick, Nelson, O'Holleran, Von Behren, Weber, and Wilson. The motion carried.**

#### **Annual Reports from Out-of-state and Private Institutions**

Dr. Fimple provided information on the following institutions that are required to report annually to the Commission.

- Crown College, St. Bonifacius, MN, at Christ Community Church (Omaha)
- Trinity International University, Deerfield, IL, at Brookside Church (Omaha)

#### **Report on SARA Activities in Nebraska**

Dr. Fimple presented Fall 2023 information on the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (SARA) that was reported in Spring 2024, noting that 29 institutions in Nebraska participate. Information on the largest number of distance students to Nebraska, states enrolling the largest number of students from Nebraska, and institutions enrolling the largest number of students from Nebraska are included in the report. Dr. Fimple noted that the only non-SARA state is California.

#### **Report on Institutional Activities Related to Existing Programs**

##### **Reasonable and Moderate Extensions**

- UNL – Graduate Certificate in the Internet of Things
- NECC – Utility Line, AAS

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*Program Name Changes*

Program Name Changes

- UNL – Undergraduate Major in Graphic Design to *Bachelor of Arts (BA) in Graphic Arts*

*Eliminated Centers*

Eliminated Centers

- UNO – Nebraska Book Arts Center at the University of Nebraska-Omaha

*Discontinued Programs*

Discontinued Programs

- UNL – Master of Science (MS) degree in Architecture (MArch, the professional graduate degree, will remain)

*Public Hearing on Planning and  
Consumer Information Committee  
Items*

**PUBLIC HEARING ON PLANNING AND CONSUMER INFORMATION  
COMMITTEE ITEMS**

There was no testimony on Planning and Consumer Information Items.

**Chair Von Behren closed the public hearing on Planning and Consumer Information Committee Items.**

*Planning and Consumer Information  
Committee*

**PLANNING AND CONSUMER INFORMATION COMMITTEE**

Commissioner O'Holleran, Committee Chair, introduced Jill Heese, Research Director, to present the *2025 Nebraska Higher Education Progress Report*.

*Commissioner O'Holleran*

*2025 Nebraska Higher Education  
Progress Report*

**2025 Nebraska Higher Education Progress Report**

Ms. Heese presented PowerPoint slides of the Progress Report. She stated there are three key priorities the Commission is required to evaluate in the report: increase the number of students who enter postsecondary education in Nebraska; increase the percentage of students who persist and successfully complete a degree; and reduce, eliminate, and reverse the net out-migration of Nebraskans with high levels of educational attainment.

*Jill Heese*

Ms. Heese noted what is new in the 2025 report and provided details on the three priorities. Given the findings of the report, more work needs to be done to increase the number of Nebraskans who enroll in college and complete degrees. Dr. Baumgartner discussed the recommendations for improvement at the high school, postsecondary, and state government levels listed in the report.

*Dr. Baumgartner*

*Committee recommendation*

Committee recommendation: That the Commission approve the *2025 Nebraska Higher Education Progress Report*.

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*2025 Nebraska Higher Education  
Progress Report approved*

**Commissioner O'Holleran, on behalf of the Planning and Consumer Information Committee, moved to approve the 2025 Nebraska Higher Education Progress Report. A roll call was taken. Voting aye: Daniels, Frison, Griffin, Headrick, Nelson, O'Holleran, Von Behren, Weber, and Wilson. The motion carried.**

*Next Commission meeting will be held  
May 16, 2025*

**FUTURE MEETING**

The next Commission meeting will be Friday, May 16, 2025, 8:30 a.m. at Concordia University, Seward, Nebraska.

*Meeting adjourned at 10:44 a.m.*

**ADJOURNMENT**

**Chair Von Behren** adjourned the meeting at 10:44 a.m.