

## WV Advisory Council of Faculty

Report by Barbara Ladner, ACF Representative, to the WVSU Senate Meeting of September 4, 2020

**ACF Request for Input: Please let us know of issues you would like us to pursue with the legislature.** *We generally try to present issues in relation to what is best for students, so instead of asking directly for pay raises, we advise legislators to provide/develop stable funding for higher education and/or emphasize the importance of retaining faculty.*

- Information that was reported at the General Faculty Meeting in August is provided below.
- ACF has continued to meet electronically.
- Dr. Dennison said that higher education institutions in general and the faculty in particular are to be commended for adjusting quickly to the online switch in the spring. The HEPC emphasizes that the entire academic year will likely be affected by COVID-19, and that institutions should plan accordingly. During the summer many recommendations were made, which institutions have been implementing according to their best judgment for their institutions.
- Interim Chancellor Sarah Tucker reported at the HEPC that the HEPC has approved the meeting a suspension of the standardized test score requirement for the Promise Scholarship due to delays in testing results for the SAT and ACT. She also urged attention to the psychological wellness of students who may have anxiety about returning to campus in the fall.
- Ascendium Education Group, a national leader in higher education philanthropy, has awarded the state \$750,000 to “support student success and accelerate degree completion.” The grant money will benefit rural, first generation, and low-income students. This will give impetus to the West Virginia Climb initiative, which aims to equip 60 percent of the state workforce with a postsecondary certificate or degree by 2030. The WV Climb campaign was launched in 2018.
- Senate Bill 760 was passed toward the end of the 2020 legislative session, and the governor signed it at the very end of the bill-signing window. It allows higher learning institutions that meet at least three of five criteria to be administratively exempt from several areas of HEPC oversight, including academic programs, institutional mission definitions, capital improvement projects, and acquisitions and purchases. Broadly stated, the criteria established by the bill pertain to enrollment rates, retention rates, graduation rates, and the financial state of the institution seeking exemption. HEPC is still combing through the bill and will promulgate some rules soon.
- Shepherd University has been exempted from HEPC oversight pursuant to SB 760, making it the first institution to take advantage of the new legislation and the fourth one in the state to receive this status. The other three institutions are West Virginia University, Marshall University, and the WV School of Osteopathic Medicine, which were exempted from HEPC oversight by the state legislature in 2017. When asked about his thoughts on why more institutions want to be free from HEPC control, Dr. Dennison said that there is a misperception that HEPC oversight can be onerous or time-consuming when in fact the HEPC has been quite receptive to and efficient in approving various institutional requests.
- HEPC remains committed to popularizing Open Educational Resources among faculty in an attempt to save students the cost of textbooks that puts a heavy burden on their finances. A recent study has shown that when students save money, they tend to enroll in more classes and complete more credits. The HEPC wants to promote the wider use of OER by working with institutions and providing mini-grants, trainings, and web-based resources. There is a workshop (about which an email was sent to all public institution faculty in the state) on Sept. 9.
- The other collaboration is for at least one workshop on best practices for using ‘open educational resources.’ The workshop will focus on subjects for which good materials already exist, many of the general education. Though the legislature is very interested in this topic, there is NO MANDATE for this. The idea is to promote OER through training, support, and encouragement.

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara Ladner

### U.S. Department of Education rule changes (reported at General Faculty Meeting)

- a. A number of extensive changes have occurred in regards to U.S. Department of Education guidelines (See Attachment #1).

- b. There is no longer a recognized difference between national and regional accreditation, and this will have a strong impact upon transfer.
- c. The U.S. Department of Education had attempted to limited the Higher Learning Commission's oversight to only 10 states, but was unsuccessful at doing so.
- d. Because of a West Virginia legal statute (in combination with the new USDE guidelines), all institutions now must technically accept transfer credits from all West Virginia post-secondary schools, including junior colleges.
- e. Satellite campuses across the nation can now receive accreditation based on the physical location of their main campus rather than their actual location.
- f. A "D" is now considered a "passing grade" and must be accepted as transfer credit, but not for specific requirements or pre-requisites.
- g. Institutions may still issue program or course pre-requisites and minimum grades
- h. Courses that share 70% of content must be accepted as transfer credits
- i. All academic programs with licensure are now required to list and post publicly the acceptance/nonacceptance of that licensure in all fifty states and the District of Columbia, respectively. These lists will show each state's rules with regard to whether or not these licensures are accepted with a denotation of "yes," "no," or "TBD." It is not clear how long "TBD" will be allowed.
- j. Dual-credit college courses can now be taught by high school teachers with no graduate content-area requirement; previously, graduate education in the discipline was required.
- k. At two-year institutions, gainful employment requirements are now gone.
- l. A 3,000 page document revising Title IX has been issued, and each institution should review these revisions and make campus changes accordingly.