

2012 COMMISSION ON FINANCIAL AID CONSOLIDATION AND MODERNIZATION

Summary of Meeting – Wednesday, August 29, 2012

At the August 29, 2012 meeting, the Commission discussed possible administrative changes to WHEG, to WTG, and also to the Wisconsin Covenant pending its scheduled sunset. The Commission also discussed the Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) component of the various programs, and was updated on the Talent Incentive Program (TIP) and the change sought to the administrative rules governing that program. At this meeting the Commission reached the following conclusions.

1. Regarding potential proration of WHEG for part-time students, the Commission noted that proration to student on less-than-half-time (LTH) status would require changes to HEA 5. The Commission concluded that it would recommend that the HEAB Board monitor the need for proration, and that the HEAB Board proceed with changes to the administrative code that would permit proration only after
 - The HEAB Board had concluded that a need for proration was evident
 - The HEAB Board had concluded that sufficient funding was available such that proration could be undertaken without a decrease in grant amounts or number of available grants to students receiving WHEG at the time of proration
 - The HEAB Board had addressed the administrative challenges inherent in proration
2. The Commission continued its discussion of the idea that the Academic Excellence Scholarship and / or the various targeted loan-forgiveness programs administered by HEAB could be subsumed into the larger grant programs (WTG and WHEG). Also discussed was a possible recommendation discouraging creation of new targeted loan-forgiveness programs. There was no agreement to recommend such actions. It was agreed that the report of the Commission would state that the issue was examined, would discuss some of the issues / questions in this regard, and would suggest further study before action is taken.
3. The Commission decided to recommend that the current capitation programs (Marquette Dental School and Medical College of Wisconsin) not be subsumed into WTG and WHEG.
4. Regarding possible administrative changes to WHEG, to WTG, and also to the Wisconsin Covenant pending its scheduled sunset:
 - The Commission endorsed a change to the appropriation supporting WHEG: The Commission recommends that, if the tie between tuition levels and a sum-sufficient appropriation for the grant programs is not made, or is put aside, that the appropriations be converted from annual to a biennial appropriation.

- The Commission endorses a change to the Wisconsin Covenant: an amendment to the administrative code that would allow HEAB staff to waive the April 1 deadline for the senior confirmation in a manner similar to what it can do for the FAFSA and for applications for other HEAB programs.
5. The Commission also discussed the Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) component of the various grant programs. The Commission endorsed a change to the SAP component of the Wisconsin Covenant program under HEA 15.05 (3) that would match SAP for Covenant to other HEAB programs: SAP eligibility would be determined by each institution for its own students, and SAP eligibility would be able to be recovered if lost.
 6. The Commission will recommend that post-secondary financial aid be considered by policymakers as separate from job-training aid, and will urge that all state programs in the area of financial aid remain within the administration of HEAB; further, that HEAB remain the location of financial aid information and access in Wisconsin.
 7. The Commission noted the importance of technology in financial aid programs, and endorsed the need for HEAB to have sufficient resources to obtain and use updated technology to administer its programs.
 8. The Commission endorsed passage of legislation comparable to 2011 Assembly Bill 142, a product of the 2010 interim study committee, which would allow student recipients of the Talent Incentive Grant to continue receiving the grant through a discontinuous enrollment as is done for other HEAB grant programs.
 9. The Commission noted the role of foundations in post-secondary financial aid, notably the Wisconsin Covenant Foundation and the Fund for Wisconsin Scholars; the Commission decided that the role of present and potential foundations should be highlighted in the Commission report.
 10. The Commission asked that its report include a list of current HEAB aid programs with basic data on each program's participation and funding levels.
 11. The Commission noted a recent report to the Council on Workforce Investment and the College and Workforce Readiness Council, which discussed the extension of WHEG and WTG to non-degree students and to students studying at less-than-half-time. The Commission noted that several members of the Commission on Financial Aid Consolidation and Modernization have shared the concerns of the Commission regarding these ideas with Tim Sullivan (Chairman of the Council on Workforce Investment and a member of the College and Workforce Readiness Council). The Commission agreed to reiterate its concerns about these proposals in its own final report.

The Commission expressed that it may meet in October to review a draft report and otherwise conclude its business. Staff were directed to complete a draft report and share it with Commission members, and to make scheduling arrangements for a possible meeting in October.

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