
FISCAL UPDATE Article

Fiscal Services Division

March 26, 2020



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Des Moines, Iowa 50319

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COLLEGE STUDENT AID COMMISSION MEETING — MARCH 20, 2020

Conference Call Meeting. The College Student Aid Commission met on March 20, 2020, by telephone conference call. The Commission received a report on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on staff and programming. Executive Director Mark Wiederspan reported that the Commission office is now closed to the public and staff are working from home with few if any exceptions. Staff members are continuing to provide guidance to postsecondary institutions on State financial aid programs and providing forbearance upon request to individuals who are repaying loans through discontinued conditional grant programs. The State authorization team is issuing guidance related to higher education institutions that are moving to online-only programming. The community engagement team is working with K-12 school representatives and community partners to remotely connect with students to encourage college choice decisions. GEAR UP is doing virtual mentoring to provide college advising and assistance in completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), and AmeriCorps is continuing to reach out to students virtually.

The Commission received a report from the Executive Director on a variety of community outreach and other programming. Executive Director Wiederspan noted that, to date, 6,460 students have received Future Ready Iowa Last-Dollar Scholarships, receiving a total of \$12.6 million.

Administrative Rules. A Notice of Intended Action was approved to propose changes to several chapters of administrative rules pertaining to health care loan repayment programs. The change specifies that distances between cities, for the purpose of defining a service commitment area, are measured and verified by calculating the shortest travel distance on paved roads. The current rules require a straight-line measurement (“as the crow flies”).

Contract Extension. The Commission approved a one-year extension to a contract with Gold Bridge Partners, Inc., for customization, configuration, and implementation of the system used to administer grant, scholarship, and loan repayment programs. The extension applies to FY 2021 and is estimated to cost \$383,000, including hardware and software upgrades.

Financial Report. The Commission received a financial report as of February 29, 2020, showing that both revenue and expenditures are below budget thus far and expenditures are less than the revenue received. The balance in the Strategic Reserve Fund is \$27.6 million, an increase in FY 2020 of \$294,000. The balance includes \$12.5 million reserved for the GEAR UP program.

Postsecondary Registration. Lisa Pundt, a member of the postsecondary registration staff, provided a report, including the status of InSpirit Institute, a massage therapy school in Dubuque. Ms. Pundt reported that Commission staff retrieved student records from the Institute on February 24, 2020, a day before the school was to be evicted from its facility. The staff was notified that there were seven active students, including two who were midway through their program of study. No electronic files were made available, and Commission staff have been unable to locate files pertaining to the two active students. Ms. Pundt said that the Commission had received several student complaints and inquiries about transcripts, student records, and education status. Students have been advised to contact Tony Alden, Board Executive with the Iowa Department of Public Health’s Bureau of Professional Licensure, to determine next steps for program completion. Ms. Pundt said that InSpirit Institute has updated its

website to indicate it will reopen soon. Staff are working on next steps for the Order to Show Cause that was approved at the November meeting.

There was a discussion regarding loans that InSpirit students may have taken. Ms. Pundt noted that the school does not participate in federal or State financial aid programs, so any loans would be private personal loans, and the Commission has no information regarding that. It was noted that InSpirit has reinstated the school's bond, payable to the State of Iowa. Staff will work with students and the Attorney General's office to provide documentation for a bond claim to provide relief to students. Commissioners requested ongoing reports from staff.

Next Meeting. The next meeting of the Commission will be May 15, 2020. The full agenda can be found on the Commission's [website](#).

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Doc ID 1133613