



Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes Wednesday, February 4, 2026

WebEx Meeting

Advisory Committee Members in Attendance

Joseph Holt
Michael Zimmerman
Kansen Chu
Leigh Ferrin
Tess Kraiker
Robyn Smith
Kevin Powers

Committee Members Absent

Robert Boykin
Assemblymember Mike Fong
Senator Angelique Ashby

Bureau for Private Postsecondary Education (Bureau) and Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA) Staff in Attendance

Deborah Cochrane, Bureau Chief
Linh Nguyen, DCA Legal Counsel
Elizabeth Elias, Deputy Bureau Chief
Manila Vongmany, Deputy Bureau Chief
Nicole Dragoo, Bureau Licensing Chief
Daniel Rangel, Bureau Enforcement Chief
Ebony Santee, Bureau Education Administrator
Yvette Johnson, Bureau Administration Chief
Erik Casida, Bureau Compliance Chief
Renee Walters, Bureau Discipline Manager
Brian Vest, Office of Student Assistance and Relief Manager
Parker Strohmeyer, Bureau Legislative/Regulation Specialist
Jason Piccione, DCA Chief Information Officer

Agenda #1 - Welcome, Introductions, and Establishment of a Quorum

Leigh Ferrin, Vice Chair, called the meeting to order and presided as acting chair at the request of Chair Tess Kraiker. Ms. Ferrin also acknowledged that Committee members Tracy Tambascia and Melanie Delgado had stepped down since the November 2025 meeting and thanked them for their service.

Agenda #2 - Public Comment on Items not on the Agenda

No public comment.

Agenda #3 - Review and Approval of November 5, 2025, Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

Kansen Chu moved to approve the November 5, 2025, meeting minutes; Tess Kraiker seconded the motion.

Public Comment

No public comment.

Vote

(Tess Kraiker: Aye; Leigh Ferrin: Aye; Joseph Holt: Aye; Kansen Chu: Aye; Michael Zimmerman: Aye; Robyn Smith: Aye)

The motion passed.

Agenda #4 - Remarks by Representative of the Department of Consumer Affairs

Judie Bucciarelli, Board and Bureau Relations, provided an update on the Department of Consumer Affairs.

Public Comment

No public comment.

Agenda #5 – Bureau Operations Update and Discussion

Update on the Bureau’s IT System Project

Jason Piccione, DCA Chief Information Officer, provided an update on the Bureau's IT system. He reported that Bureau staff are currently working with selected institutions to test expanded online services for the institution portal, including the ability to submit and pay annual fees online and to submit quarterly Student Tuition Recovery Fund (STRF) assessments, in advance of opening portal access to all institutions in the coming months.

Public Comment

One member of the public provided a comment.

Licensing Report

Ms. Vongmany reported on the Licensing Unit. She outlined Attachment 5(b).

Joseph Holt commended the Bureau on the progress made in reducing full approval application timelines, noting that the improvements reflect effective internal resource allocation. He encouraged the Bureau to continue controlling internal processes while acknowledging that institution responsiveness remains a variable outside the Bureau's direct control.

Ms. Vongmany thanked Mr. Holt and noted that additional outreach and engagement opportunities identified through workshop feedback are being explored.

Public Comment

No public comment.

Quality of Education Report

Ebony Santee, Bureau Education Administrator, reported on the Quality of Education Unit (QEU). She outlined Attachment 5(c).

Public Comment

One member of the public provided a comment.

Compliance and Annual Report Update

Erik Casida, Bureau Compliance Chief, reported on the Annual Report Unit. He outlined Attachment 5(d).

Public Comment

No public comment.

Complaint and Investigation Report

Daniel Rangel, Bureau Enforcement Chief over complaints and investigations, reported on the Complaint and Investigation Unit. He outlined Attachment 5(e).

Robyn Smith thanked the Bureau for the additional context on the insufficient evidence category.

Joseph Holt asked whether the examples provided were representative or random samples. Mr. Rangel explained that they were both random and representative. He added that, of all complaints closed in calendar year 2025, only 57 were closed for insufficient evidence, and that most closures in the combined non-substantiated/insufficient-evidence category fall into the former group, distinctions not currently reflected in the materials. Mr. Holt recommended separating insufficient evidence closures from unsubstantiated closures in future reports.

Ms. Smith requested a breakdown of non-substantiated cases and clarification of what non-substantiation means, including whether there are specific types of evidence considered sufficient for substantiation. She also asked what percentage of insufficient-evidence closures involve anonymous or non-responsive complainants. Mr. Rangel stated that anonymous and non-responsive complainants make up a large share of insufficient-evidence closures but did not have an exact percentage available. He noted that lack of complainant participation is often a significant barrier to investigation. Ms. Smith requested that this information be included in a future report.

Public Comment

No public comment.

Discipline Report

Renee Walters, Bureau Discipline Manager, reported on the Discipline Unit. She outlined Attachment 5(f).

Public Comment

No public comment.

Office of Student Assistance and Relief (OSAR) Report

Brian Vest, OSAR Manager, reported on the OSAR Unit. He outlined Attachment 5(g).

Robyn Smith requested a future breakdown of transcript assistance contacts, including whether students are having difficulty obtaining transcripts from closed schools and whether any schools are refusing to provide transcripts due to unpaid debts, and how such violations are handled.

Ms. Ferrin noted appreciation for the partner highlights slide and expressed that the outreach efforts are valuable and not always well known.

Public Comment

No public comment.

Student Tuition Recovery Fund (STRF) Report

Yvette Johnson, Bureau Administration Chief, provided a report on STRF. She covered Attachment 5(h).

Public Comment

No public comment.

Agenda Item #6 - Status Updates and Discussion on Regulatory Proposals

Parker Strohmeier, Bureau Legislative/Regulation Specialist, provided a status update on Bureau regulatory matters. He outlined the Bureau Regulations Tracker in the meeting materials.

6a. Use of the Term “University” (California Education Code (CEC) section 94897; Title 5, California Code of Regulations (5 CCR) section 74150)

Mr. Strohmeier outlined the proposed regulatory language regarding the use of the term “university.” He explained that existing regulations define “university” and restrict use of the term unless an institution meets the definition or uses qualifying language to prevent deception. He continued that proposed changes would specify that institutions must meet two criteria to use the term, including accreditation by a U.S. Department of Education-recognized accrediting agency, and conferral of graduate degrees. He stated this establishes a clear objective standard and prevents unaccredited institutions from using the term prior to achieving accreditation.

Mr. Holt asked about grandfathered institutions. Mr. Strohmeyer confirmed that grandfathered institutions are not required to change their name under this package, but if they voluntarily change their name in the future, they must meet the new requirements.

Public Comment

No public comment.

6b. Minimum Operating Standards – Financials (CEC sections 94885 and 94934; 5 CCR sections 71475, 74002, 74110, and 74115)

Mr. Strohmeyer outlined the proposed regulatory changes to minimum operating standards for financial statements. He explained that the package proposes to: eliminate an inconsistency in the level of review required for financial statements submitted with renewal applications (5 CCR section 71475); add a definition for generally accepted accounting principles (5 CCR section 74002); clarify the term “current” (5 CCR section 74115); allow institutions to submit financial statements electronically with annual reports; and clarify that financial statements submitted with annual reports may be either audited or reviewed (5 CCR section 74110).

Mr. Strohmeyer noted that the Bureau is considering whether to modify financial standards applicable to Title IV-participating institutions, given changes occurring at the federal level. He reported that the school participation division of the Department of Education saw the majority of its staff positions eliminated in March 2025, raising questions about the continued meaningful federal oversight. He noted that developing state-level standards would take time and carry administrative burdens, while delaying action could create oversight gaps.

Mr. Holt noted that composite scores are calculated by institutions and their independent auditors and reported to the Department of Education, not calculated by the Department itself. He stated that the reduction in federal staff does not eliminate the calculation of composite scores and that independent auditors remain involved. He clarified that this does not resolve all concerns raised by the Bureau, but on the specific question of composite score calculation, the elimination of federal staff does not mean scores will cease to be produced.

Ms. Ferrin noted that if state-level standards were promulgated, consistency with existing federal frameworks would be important to avoid placing dual compliance burdens on institutions.

Mr. Zimmerman noted that the Department of Education would likely not cease calculating composite scores given the significant effects on institutions participating in NC-SARA, where maintaining an up-to-date composite score is a requirement.

Public Comment

No public comment.

Agenda #7 – Sunset Review: Process Overview and Member Discussion

Ms. Cochrane provided context for the sunset review. She explained that the Bureau is scheduled for a comprehensive sunset review in 2026, through which the Legislature will determine whether and how to reauthorize the Bureau beyond January 1, 2027. She stated that the Bureau submitted its sunset report to the Legislature on January 9, 2026, and the report is publicly available on the Bureau's website and was provided to all Committee members. She noted that the next step is for the Legislature's authorizing committees to draft a background paper and schedule a hearing, for which a date had not yet been confirmed at the time of the meeting.

Ms. Smith expressed appreciation for the thoroughness and quality of the sunset report, commending Bureau Chief Cochrane and the staff for the progress made in addressing long-standing issues and for the substance and recommendations of the report.

Mr. Holt stated that he has been engaged with four previous sunset reports and described this as the most practical and mission-aligned of those documents. He highlighted the specificity of the recommendations, including proposed redline changes to legislative text, as a strong foundation for legislative conversations.

Kevin Powers echoed prior comments on the quality of the report. He noted that he is working with colleagues from the Senate Business and Professions and Senate Education Committees on a joint draft background paper and anticipated the sunset hearing to occur in early to mid-March 2026. He noted that the sunset process typically results in a policy bill extending the Bureau's authorization and potentially addressing policy considerations raised in the background paper.

Ms. Cochrane thanked the Committee for acknowledging the staff's efforts, noting that the report represented a seven-month all-hands effort, with contributions from most Bureau staff.

Public Comment

One member of the public provided a comment.

Agenda #8 – Future Agenda Items

No future agenda items were requested.

Public Comment

One member of the public provided a comment.

Agenda #9 – Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 11:35 am.