



Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes Wednesday, February 26, 2025

WebEx Meeting

Advisory Committee Members in Attendance

Kansen Chu
Tracy Tambascia
Melanie Delgado
Leigh Ferrin
Joseph Holt
Tess Kraiker
Robyn Smith
Michael Zimmerman
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
Daniel Rangel, Bureau Enforcement Chief
Ebony Santee, Bureau Education Administrator
Scott Valverde, Office of Student Assistance and Relief Chief
Yvette Johnson, Bureau Administration Chief
Parker Strohmeyer, Bureau Legislative/Regulation Specialist
Jason Piccione, DCA Chief Information Officer
Ryan Tacher, DCA Legislative Affairs

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

Committee Chair, Leigh Ferrin, called the meeting to order.

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

No public comment.

Agenda #3 - Review and Approval of May 15, 2024, Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

Tess Kraiker moved to approve the November 13, 2024, meeting minutes; Joseph Holt seconded the motion.

Public Comment

No public comment.

Vote

(Tess Kraiker: Aye; Tracy Tambascia: Aye; Melanie Delgado: Aye; Joseph Holt: Aye; Robyn Smith: Aye; Michael Zimmerman: Abstain; Kansen Chu: Abstain; Leigh Ferrin: Aye)

The motion passed.

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

Ryan Tacher, DCA Legislative Affairs, provided an update on the Department of Consumer Affairs (Department).

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 project. Mr. Piccione reported that the new IT system is on track to be released in Spring 2025. He noted three major components of the release, including: the conversion of data from the

legacy system to the new platform, online annual fee payments, and online quarterly Student Tuition Recovery Fund (STRF) assessment submissions

Public Comment

No public comment.

Licensing Report

Manila Vongmany, Deputy Bureau Chief, reported on the Licensing Unit. She outlined Attachment 5(b).

Mr. Holt commented on the development of a chess clock analysis to determine the amount of time an application is pending with an institution and the Bureau. He asked if there has been any specific implementation of tools or data flags within the new IT system that will provide visibility in the future to determine how much time a full approval application spends with each responsible party. Ms. Vongmany stated that the new IT system will allow staff to see where the application is at each step of the process and will track the time for each step of the process.

Mr. Holt requested to see at a future meeting an example of what a successful application submission looks like. He commented that it would be helpful to applicants and would provide them with understanding of the median timeframe in days to fully complete an application without deficiencies. He further stated that many unaccredited institutions tend to be very small operations and that approval timeframes of 500 days are too long and need to be lowered.

Ms. Smith asked if the Bureau needs more staff to more quickly reduce the backlog of applications. Ms. Vongmany responded that a deeper analysis would need to be done to determine if more staff is needed. Ms. Cochrane noted that applications for unaccredited institutions go through the Licensing Unit and Quality of Education Unit, which adds more complexity to procedures and staffing.

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

No public comment.

Annual Report (AR) Report

Elizabeth Elias, Bureau Deputy Chief, reported on the Annual Report Unit. She outlined Attachment 5(d).

Public Comment

No public comment.

Compliance and Discipline Report

Ms. Elias reported on the Compliance and Discipline Unit. She outlined Attachment 5(e).

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(f).

Ms. Smith asked for examples of non-jurisdictional complaints to be presented at the next meeting.

Mr. Holt requested to see at the next meeting a breakdown of closed complaints with complaints closed at intake separate from the total number of closed complaints in a quarter.

Public Comment

No public comment.

Office of Student Assistance and Relief (OSAR) Report

Scott Valverde, OSAR Chief, reported on the OSAR Unit. He informed the Committee this would be his last meeting, as he is retiring on May 2, 2025. He expressed his appreciation for the opportunity to work with students, the Bureau, and the Committee.

Mr. Valverde outlined Attachment 5(g).

The Committee thanked Mr. Valverde for his service to students and congratulated him on his upcoming retirement.

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).

Ms. Smith stated that she is very thankful for the relief STRF provides students in distress.

Public Comment

No public comment.

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

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

6a. Catalog Requirements (California Education Code (CEC) section 94909; Title 5, California Code of Regulations (5 CCR) section 71810)

Mr. Strohmeyer outlined the memo titled Catalog Requirements in the meeting packet and turned to the Committee for any questions or comments.

Mr. Holt commented that he endorses the suggestions laid out in the Catalog Requirements memo.

Public Comment

No public comment.

6b. Unapproved Activity (CEC sections 94886 and 94944; 5 CCR sections 75020 and 75030)

Ms. Elias provided an overview of unapproved activity. She stated that the proposed regulatory changes provide clear guidelines for the assessment of fines.

Ms. Elias explained that the proposed language establishes a minimum fine amount for unapproved activity reinforcing the serious consequence of non-compliance and serves as a meaningful deterrent. She noted that without a minimum fine amount, some institutions may view fines as merely the cost of doing business rather than a mandate to comply with statutory and regulatory requirements that govern the private postsecondary industry.

Ms. Elias outlined in the proposed language how aggravating and mitigating factors would be considered when determining the fine amount. She explained that aggravating factors may include harm to students, consumers, or the public, prior knowledge of the Bureau as demonstrated through previous citations for unapproved activity, or having held prior approvals. She stated that mitigating factors may include an institution's acknowledgment of wrongdoing, implementation of immediate corrective action to prevent reoccurrence, and cooperating with the Bureau's investigation. She noted that the factors outlined are in line with how the Bureau currently sets fine levels based on the specific circumstances of each case. She added that the goal of establishing these factors in regulation is to ensure fines are issued in a fair and consistent manner, and in a way that supports predictability, clarity, and integrity of the orders.

Ms. Elias also pointed out that the proposed regulatory changes conform citation authority for unapproved activity with law changes enacted in 2021 and 2022. She noted that Senate Bill 1433 specified that the \$100,000 maximum fine for citations for unapproved institutions does not include the value of refunds ordered to be paid back to the students.

Mr. Strohmeyer further outlined the proposed changes to 5 CCR section 75020 (Issuance of Citations) and section 75030 (Assessment of Administrative Fines).

Public Comment

No public comment.

Agenda #7 – Future Agenda Items

Ms. Kraiker requested at a future meeting any updates on prior proposals to potentially utilize the STRF fund in different ways.

Mr. Holt asked for any legislative updates regarding the Bureau's budget.

Public Comment

No public comment.

Agenda #8 – Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 11:20 am.