**Minutes**

**State Board of Private Career Education**

**Arkansas Division of Higher Education – Meeting by Phone**

**April 1, 2020 – 10:00 a.m.**

**Members Present:** Alice Obenshain, Jack Avery, Brittney Matthews, Josh Blevins, Brock Thompson, Jacqueline Brownell

**Others Present:** Alana Boles, Tracye McKeown, Julie Chavis, Jennifer Dedman

**Welcome and Approval of Minutes of December 10, 2019 Meeting**

Josh Blevins called the meeting to order and asked if anyone had any comments or questions regarding the minutes from the last meeting. There being no questions or comments, the minutes of the December 10, 2019 meeting were approved with all present voting in favor.

**Report from Arkansas Division of Higher Education (ADHE) Staff**

Alana Boles welcomed Jennifer Dedman and Julie Chavis to the meeting. Dedman introduced herself to the board and said that she is the attorney working with the ADHE on behalf of the Arkansas Department of Education in revising the SBPCE Rules and Regulations. Chavis, representing the Attorney General’s office, offered her assistance with the revision of the Rules.

**ADHE/SBPCE Response to Coronavirus**

Boles updated the board on the license renewal process of all the private career school licenses that expire April 30, 2020. Boles said that due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) some adjustments have been made to that process. She added that staff are working from home and are able to do what is needed for private career schools.

Jack Avery asked if any of the schools have asked about extensions. Boles responded that the renewal deadline has been extended to May 31, 2020. Boles added that many schools are either not operating or are going to online. Alice Obenshain, owner of Arkansas Welding Academy, said she has closed her school until further notice. Brock Thompson, owner of A1 Thompson Driving School, said he stopped all business. Thompson thanked the staff for its decision-making in taking action early and being proactive. He also talked about the need to support smaller schools to navigate through the pandemic. Boles said the early response was encouraged by Governor Hutchinson, Secretary Key and Director Markham to help make it easier for our constituency. Brittney Matthews at Eastern College said that they are continuing with online classes and learning about different delivery methods and online platforms. Thompson asked Matthews what platform they are using for their classroom sessions. Matthews responded that they are using Remind 101 and Noodle, which is comparable to Blackboard.

Boles reported that a concerned parent called regarding a Certified Nursing Assistant school that requires clinicals in nursing homes. The parent was concerned that the school is still sending students into nursing homes. Boles stated the Department of Human Services, having oversight of nursing homes, has been contacted and is looking into the situation.

Blevins said that it is a very challenging time for many and spoke in favor of foregoing the collection of any fees until this crisis has passed. Chavis stated she believed that if it is not feasible to waive all fees, then late fees should be waived. Chavis added that she represents several boards and commissions and they are waiving late fees and granting extensions. Boles said that ADHE is giving the schools a one month extension but the licensure fee is still due on April 30. She said she would need to look at the law and the rules and regulations to see if the fees could be waived. Chavis stated any reasonable idea is on the table and worth consideration and, as Boles stated, that is the spirit of Secretary Key and Director Markham as well.

Obenshain said waiving the late fee is an option. She also added that licenses could be due on the same date the state recently put out for collection of taxes and fees. Boles suggested that the board make a motion concerning the fees to be presented to Director Markham and Secretary Key.

Obenshain asked if delaying the fees would put the ADHE budget in jeopardy.  Blevins responded that he did not believe that would be an issue since the board is no longer self-funded. Obenshain asked if the board is making a motion to defer fees with no late penalties should the budget allow in the interest of better supporting our schools during this time. Brownell suggested that there be no date on the motion to collect fees until further notice regarding COVID-19.

Blevins asked if there is a motion for the board to recommend to the director of ADHE to hold the collection of all school licensing fees until such time as the director of ADHE deems appropriate.  Matthews added that even though the licensing fee is being delayed, she believed each school should be required to complete the online renewal application. Chavis responded that all schools need to complete the online renewal application for record keeping.  Blevins added that the motion would be to delay the collection of fees and that the online renewal application would continue to be required to be completed. All were in favor.

**Nominations of New Board Officers**

Blevins said that he has served on the board since 2012 and as board chair since 2015. He added that his term expired in April and he has decided it is time to give someone else an opportunity to be chair of the board. Blevins added that it has been a pleasure serving on the board and requested nominations for new board officers.

Brownell nominated Obenshain for board chair. Blevins asked each member to cast their vote; the SBPCE voted for Obenshain to become the next chair. Brittney Matthews will be vice-chair, according to the votes of the board.

Obenshain thanked the board and asked Blevins to complete his final day as chair by assisting her in closing out the meeting.

**Input from State Board of Private Career Education Members**

Blevins asked for any additional input from board members before the close of the meeting. Thompson and Matthews thanked Blevins for his time and dedication to the board. Blevins said he enjoyed his time on the board.  Obenshain asked if Blevins would still be a part of the board until his replacement is appointed. Chavis stated that according to Arkansas law he could continue to serve after his term has expired and until his replacement is named.

Obenshain asked if a motion could be made for Blevins to stay on the board. Boles explained that the SBPCE is composed of gubernatorial appointments.  Brownell added that she would miss Blevins on the board and thanked him for his time and commitment. Blevins made a motion to adjourn. Obenshain seconded. All were in favor. The meeting adjourned at 10:45 a.m.