



Division of Higher Education

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Jacob Oliva
Secretary

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Commissioner

Minutes State Board of Private Career Education Arkansas Division of Higher Education – Meeting by Zoom Tuesday, January 23, 2024 – 10:00 a.m.

Members Present: Alice Obenshain, Brock Thompson, Sterling Penix, Jack Avery, Jasmine Wilson

Others Present: Clayton Orr, Alana Colburn, Tracye McKeown

Welcome and Approval of Minutes of the October 25, 2023, Meeting

Chair Alice Obenshain asked for a motion to approve the October 25, 2023, minutes. Brock Thompson made a motion. Jack Avery seconded the motion. All were in favor. The minutes were approved.

Report of Private Career Education Work at ADHE

Alana Colburn stated that five new school applications are in various stages of processing. Ms. Colburn added that 85 transcript requests had been fulfilled since the last Board meeting in October.

Alana Colburn said Eastern College of Health Vocations' student records are being digitized by Total Document Solutions and the digitized student records are expected to be completed soon.

Alana Colburn informed the Board about a student complaint against a school that is being processed. Ms. Colburn added that the complaint is not to the point of a hearing but there could be the need for a hearing if the complaint does not get resolved. Ms. Colburn said the Board will be made aware if a hearing is necessary.

Input from SBPCE Members

Chair Alice Obenshain asked if the cost for digitizing the Eastern College records is coming out of Private Career Education school funds and if the schools may have to start paying back into the PCE account. Alana Colburn said there are sufficient funds in the Private Career Education account and does not foresee schools having to pay back into the account. Ms. Colburn added that she would provide a dollar amount to the Board by email or report at the next Board meeting.

Chair Alice Obenshain asked if ADHE staff are paying attention to school names when new school applications are received to make sure the name of the school does not falsely represent the school. Alana Colburn said that is looked at but there are limitations since the rules do not address what a school can name itself. Chair Obenshain said she would send Ms. Colburn a section of the rules that address that directly. Chair Obenshain added that it seems attention has not been paid to that over the past 11 years and she wants to bring that to the forefront.

Chair Obenshain asked for a detail of the student complaint process against a Private Career Education School. Ms. Colburn said the rules state that if a student has a complaint against a school, the student sends a form to ADHE, then ADHE sends the complaint to the school by certified mail and the school has ten days to respond. Ms. Colburn added that then the student has ten days to respond to the school's response to the complaint. If there is no resolution of the student complaint, then there can be a hearing in front of the Board. Ms. Colburn said the hearing is similar to a trial with a hearing officer and a court reporter. Ms. Colburn added that the students can have an attorney or represent themselves and ask questions, and the Board is represented by Julie Chavis at the Attorney General's Office, and she can ask questions. Ms. Colburn informed the Board that at the end of the process, the Board deliberates in public and decides on the issue. Ms. Colburn added that there have been two hearings since ADHE took responsibility for Private Career Education schools. Ms. Colburn said it can be a long process depending on the complaint. Chair Obenshain added that it could be a full day or longer. Clayton Orr informed the Board that whenever there is a hearing it is like a trial except the Board members are the jurors and can ask questions. Mr. Orr added that the jury must deliberate in public and there is more flexibility than in a normal trial.

Clayton Orr asked Chair Obenshain to provide Julie Chavis with a copy of the rules about the names of schools.

Jack Avery asked for the financial disclosure form. Alana Colburn said she would send the Board that information.

Chair Alice Obenshain reminded the Board of the next board meeting on Wednesday, March 27, 2024, at 11:00 a.m. in person at the office of the Arkansas Division of Higher Education and added that a Zoom option will be available.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:17 a.m.