



SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
College of Western Idaho Board of Trustee
April 21, 2008
Boise State University West Campus Building, Room 119
Nampa, Idaho

A special meeting of the Trustees for the College of Western Idaho was held April 21, 2008 at the Boise State University Campus Building in Nampa, Idaho. Chairman Jerry Hess presided.

Present:

Jerry Hess, Chairman
Mark Dunham, Vice Chairman
Mary Carol (M.C.) Niland, Secretary
Guy Hurlbutt

Absent:

Hatch Barrett, excused absence

Trustee Work:

The meeting was called to order at 10:25 a.m. by Chairman Hess.

Chairman Hess presented the following for discussion:

To: Trustees and Administration of the College of Western Idaho.

From: Jerry Hess Chair of the board of trustees.

Read preceding a major planning session of the trustees and Administration.

Dear colleagues

Thank you for your sincere dedicated labor and efforts on behalf of the citizens of Ada and Canyon Counties along with the students of CWI. It has been an honor to serve with such committed selfless public servants.

The following discussion is intended to make some observations, comments and issues which I have been pondering since our last board meeting. Also, included are thoughts from preceding months, about issues which may seriously affect the long term options for CWI and possible negative results for the students and citizens of Canyon and Ada Counties if not reviewed carefully for clarity and understanding before decisions are made..

At the second official CWI meeting held last September, I outlined a brief vision for CWI, based on my views. I suggested exploring adjustments from the traditional educational model before we proceeded very far. That suggestion was to encourage a review of traditional educational standards and measures, when viewed against emerging state of the art educational capabilities for determining the wisest course going forward. I also suggested we review and consider additional options about the transfer of Selland College, including the salary and benefits package. Not because their staff is inferior, of whom I am certainly not qualified to judge, but for a possible need for CWI to be more flexible in the emerging and current unique educational models than their current policies, procedures and employment package may allow.

Before we were presented with the proposed employee salary and benefit package at the last board meeting, I reviewed a vision for optional educational models and potential consequences of adopting existing operating and employment policies that may be too restrictive. I voted against those packages last week and should have more clearly explained my decision for that action, which I now regret. I desire here to further clarify my views, and include broader issues that I feel we must review in an attempt to avoid unanticipated consequences for future trustees, administration, and especially students.

We should consider futuristic Twenty-First Century educational models, along with successful elements of existing ones, which have been reviewed by educational specialists before we adopt them. When we accepted part of the existing BSU employment package last week, we may have possibly established a precedent requiring future employees to accept the same package, which may contain past restrictions and limitations of BSU's status quo.

I may be crying wolf unnecessarily. However, I prefer to err on the side of safety until we get the experts council on these and other issues, before we make a series of none or very difficult irreversible decisions. Randy Spiwac provided council last fall that included caution concerning many traditional practices and policies, some of which we may be in the process of adopting. He also offered free continuous expert opinion for all phases of our institutional evolution, which we have ignored. I referred to that fact briefly last Tuesday, but did not try to press it. Albertson Foundation even offered to pay for expert training last fall. I believe we should seek input from Randy, George Copa and/or other experts before we make further decisions of which could have undesirable consequences.

Ours is the first Community College Institution implemented in Idaho for decades. This provides a rare opportunity for a clean slate to establish flexible non-restrictive policies, procedures, and practices that allow efficiencies for not just current but yet to be discovered verities. Existing and seasoned models are often very difficult to modify or eliminate. This can be confirmed in a number of educational publications and in recent attempts by our own Superintendent of Public Instruction and other countless documented publications.

It has been a short nine months since our inception and we have advanced very rapidly. It may be wise now to pause, step back and evaluate where we are, and review where we are going. The demand to rush for accomplishment and implementation, whether imagined or real, tends to dilute and/or, break focus on needed deep analyses of current and future actions and results which may result in serious mistakes. We must not allow this opportunity to slip away into a traditional regular cookie cutter institution, when we are in a one time opportunity to become a real flexible, student friendly, economically sound, Twenty First Century Community College.

It is my opinion that CWI should, and still could, establish our own unique employment terms and conditions, consistent with public codes, but flexible enough to offer diverse working conditions, salary schedules, benefits, and other values, after expert consultation, even if it required a delay in our starts. Our employment offers would then be extended to all Selland staff to apply for positions along with all qualified personnel from wherever they may come, based on our yet-to-be-defined standards, and not rely on the models of other institutions.

This proposal was very unpopular last September when I first broached this subject. I am confident it still is. However, to me, getting it correct is more important than getting it quick and readily implemented. I suggest a thorough review by competent experts, of all proposed policies and procedures that materially affect the future options of our institution, before any are adopted.

I have felt for a long time we have not been as diligent as we should have been about exploring broader, more flexible and accountable twenty-first century educational models and obtaining a thorough understanding of the consequences for our decisions. For want of courage because of the rejection last September, and a desire for unity, I have been less forceful in sharing my views and requests than I feel I should have been. After further research and increased literacy on the subject, some few examples of which have been transmitted to each of you from time to time, I am more persuaded now, than I was then, that we must be more cautious. The consequences of getting it wrong, which I referred to in my Statesman article last fall, are too great for me to assume. In my judgment, we have not yet sought adequate opinions from outside consultants that are wiser and more experienced specialists than we are.

We are currently about to embark on a major planning process that will help define the type of institution we desire to create. Vision, goals, objectives and all the other actions we approve will be of lesser value if the policies, procedures, and other inadvertently placed restrictions may preclude its desired results.

In the planning process we must include another dimension during our deliberations that involves a close review of current and proposed restrictive policies and procedures, not in code, to insure they are not adopted or will not be adopted that will restrict or eliminate the opportunity for flexibility and desired results. Also, all decisions and conclusions must be measured against the impact they have on students which is the basic purpose for all we do.

With the above explanations, I am requesting a thorough review of our current and future policy decisions, including the discoveries that could materially effect our options. We must have a clear understanding of the potential results of those decisions.

This meeting is not the format or time to discuss this document. I suggest you each take a copy and thoroughly review this, along with your opinions, which may differ wholly or in part from my views. We will place this on a future agenda to be discussed. The sunshine law prohibited me from providing an advanced copy for your comments which must be aired in public. It may well be I am the only person having difficulties with the above discussed subjects, If so, it will be a very short future discussed agenda item.

I request this document be entered in the official minutes of the trustee's deliberations.

Thank you for your considerations.

Sincerely, Jerry Hess CWI board chair.

Strategic Planning:


Kathy Hagler and Associates led a discussion on strategic planning and strategic governance.

Adjourn

Chairman Hess adjourned the meeting at 2:40 p.m.



M.C. Niland, Secretary



Date