

APPENDIX H

Letter from SBOE Regarding Recommendation 6



IDAHO STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

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To: Idaho University and College Presidents

From: Mike Rush

Subject: Summary of Board Actions in Response to Standard 6B6

Date: Revised, April 14, 2008

The following is a response to the concerns of the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) over Idaho's compliance with Standard 6B6. The State Board of Education is extremely concerned about the deficit identified and has taken specific and aggressive steps to rectify that matter. In addition, this communication outlines steps the Board has taken in the past that were not (or not completely) reflected in the institution responses to the accrediting body. It is intended that this information also demonstrate the Board's commitment to meeting Standard 6B6.

Recent History of Board Self-Evaluation:

1. In April 2006 the Board staff proposed that the Board conduct a self-evaluation and discuss the requirement in more detail at the May 11th strategic planning meeting.
2. April 2006, Board President Laird Stone and Executive Director Dwight Johnson traveled to Seattle to meet with Dr. Sandra Elman of NWCCU.
3. May 2006, a self-evaluation document (see Attachment 1) was sent to all Board members.
4. In August 2006 the Executive Director sent a compilation of Board member self-evaluation responses to all Board members, stating: "This document will be evaluated by staff for recommendations for improvements and will become part of our annual strategic planning process. As you review this information I would welcome any feedback and comments to help us make this an effective learning tool."
5. August 22, 2006, Board President Laird Stone stated, "I have reviewed the assessment. Everything under a 4 should be closely reviewed to determine how we can improve as a board. We need feedback from the board on how the board meetings can be improved in order to be more effective. This is the first area I would like to address as I believe we will find that the reasons encompass a number of the other low areas. Thoughts and inputs are welcome."
6. An analysis of the Board's self-evaluation, in part, led to the following:
 - Reviewed Board policies related to Conflict of Interest and Interpretation
 - Enhanced the new Board member orientation (Note: this is still an area that needs additional improvement)
 - Improved the submission process for Department of Education agenda materials
 - Changed and improved the meeting format for the Executive Committee

- Enhanced the staff review of agenda materials
 - Initiated the development of a better plan for external and internal communications
 - Initiated public focus group meetings around the state
 - Conducted a review of the vision, mission, and strategic plan
 - Restructured the Board Staff
 - Developed a briefing procedure for the Board President prior to each meeting
7. May 10-11, 2007, The Board invited Dr. Sandra Elman, President of the NWCCU, to discuss the regional accreditation process, planning and governance standards germane to the work of the Board, and involvement in the institutions' self-study processes.
 8. March 17, 2008. The Executive Committee of the State Board met on a phone conference call with Dr. Sandra Elman to discuss accreditation issues including participation in accreditation visits and the best process for Board self-evaluation. The Board members outlined the steps they had taken and were planning to take with regards to self-evaluation and received guidance from Dr. Elman on how to make that process most effective. The Board members also emphasized their commitment to this process and their desire to get it right.

Current Self-Evaluation Activities:

1. The Board conducted a special self-evaluation and strategic planning meeting on March 27, 2008. A self-evaluation questionnaire, approved by the Board Executive Committee, was sent to each Board member (see Attachment 2). Self-evaluation findings were summarized and discussed and will be used to modify and improve Board processes. Board staff was instructed to develop an action plan based on the issues identified in the self-evaluation.
2. The Board gave initial approval (first reading) to two (2) changes to Board policy. The policy initiatives (see Attachment 3) are intended to strengthen the Board's self-evaluation efforts, and to increase the Board's level of involvement in NWCCU accreditation visitations.
3. Calendars for all Board planning and budgeting activities (part of the draft 2009-2013 strategic planning document and process) have been developed by the Executive Director and approved by the Executive Committee for consideration by the full Board. (Separate draft calendars for 2008 and the years 2009-2013 are shown in Attachment 4.) These planning calendars include specific references to NWCCU accreditation activities and incorporate a schedule for annual self-evaluation activities by the Board. For fiscal year 2008, Board self-evaluation will be accomplished in March 2008, and areas that are identified for improvement will influence strategic planning activities culminating in June. For the fiscal years 2009 and beyond, Board self-evaluations will be conducted each September, reviewed by the full Board in October and incorporated into the Board policy manual, and staff internal operations and strategic planning documents, as appropriate.