

**Delaware Health Care Commission  
DELAWARE INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL EDUCATION & RESEARCH**

**December 7, 2016**

**University of Delaware  
STAR Campus Health Sciences Complex, Room 113  
540 S. College Avenue, Newark**

**MINUTES**

**Board Members Present:** Sherman Townsend, Chairman; Brian Aboff, MD, FACP; David Barlow, PhD; Neil Jasani, MD, MBA; Vincent Lobo, Jr., DO (via teleconference); Kathleen Matt, PhD; James Richards, PhD; and Wayne Smith

**School Liaisons Present:** Deborah Benvenger, Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine (PCOM); and David Paskin, MD, Sidney Kimmel Medical College (Sidney Kimmel) (via teleconference)

**Staff Present:** Laura Howard and Shebra Hall, Delaware Health Care Commission

**Other Guests:** Lisa Goodman, Young Conaway Stargatt & Taylor, LLP; Deborah Hamilton, and Cheryl Heiks, Cozen O'Connor; and, Mark Thompson, Medical Society of Delaware

**CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Sherman Townsend called the meeting to order at 4:08 p.m.

**APPROVAL OF SEPTEMBER 28, 2016 MEETING MINUTES**

Mr. Townsend requested a vote on the September 28, 2016 meeting minutes. Mr. Wayne Smith motioned to approve the minutes. Dr. Neil Jasani seconded the motion. Voice votes approved. The motion was carried. After the meeting, it was determined that a quorum did not exist and that minutes will be deferred for the next meeting for voting.

**ANNUAL DIMER DINNERS**

The annual DIMER dinners are an opportunity for DIMER Board members and representatives from medical institutions and residency programs to meet and engage with DIMER students in the participating DIMER medical schools. The annual dinner with 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> year DIMER students at Sidney Kimmel was held on Monday, December 5<sup>th</sup>, 2016 in the Eakins Lounge in Jefferson Alumni Hall. Mr. Townsend reported that in spite of the elimination of DIMER funds from the State budget, DIMER still has a positive relationship with Sidney Kimmel. At the dinner, Mr. Townsend informed the DIMER students of the funding situation and advised students to contact their legislators. He will provide the students with advocacy tools, including contact information for their legislators. The students enjoyed and appreciated the dinner and the opportunities it presented. Dr. Paskin added that it was the best DIMER dinner yet, as it was a great turn out and the students were attentive and engaged.

The annual dinner with DIMER students at PCOM will be held on Thursday, December 8<sup>th</sup> in the Borghese Garden at the Hilton. Ms. Benvenger reported that they are expecting 77 guests, including 36 DIMER students. Delaware students are showing a high level of interest in the future of DIMER, and much concern. The students are relieved that PCOM is still hosting the DIMER dinner, and hoping to continue the positive relationship.

The annual dinner for Sidney Kimmel 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> year DIMER students will be on Tuesday, January 3<sup>rd</sup> at La Buca restaurant. For more information, and to RSVP for this dinner, please contact the DHCC office.

## **THE FUTURE OF DIMER**

Mr. Townsend reveled in the over 45 year-history of DIMER, sharing that Delaware has over 180 through DIMER alumni practicing in Delaware. He suggested that the residency programs that have grown out of the relationship with Jefferson University have been critical to recruiting physicians to practice in Delaware. Currently there are over 150 physicians in Delaware residency, in more than 28 different specialties. Through the DIMER dinners and better communication efforts, students are now getting the message that they have somewhat of a “moral” responsibility to support and advocate for DIMER and return to Delaware for practice

Mr. Townsend is confident that engaging the DIMER students and recruiting them to stay in Delaware, will make a difference. Dr. Neil Jasani added that there has been an increase in the number of students doing their residency in Delaware, which is encouraging. Mr. Townsend pointed out that if Delaware established its own medical school, it would cost the state millions. He added that we need to educate the legislature to understand that this small investment is very valuable to Delaware and a great opportunity for Delaware students.

The Board was made aware that OMB is not allocating money to new programs for the next fiscal year, and since DIMER funding was not in the general State budget, but a one-time source from the grants-in-aid bill, DIMER is now considered a new program. Mr. Townsend suggested we continue to work to dispel that thinking, and solicit support from and educate the current Governor and Governor-Elect, so that they may address DIMER in their budget proposals. DIMER is also soliciting support from professional associations and societies. DIMER representatives recently met with the Medical Society of Delaware (MSD). Mark Thompson of MSD declared that the society is firmly committed to supporting DIMER and is actively advocating for the full restoration of State funding, with support from medical specialty societies, the Delaware Healthcare Association (DHA), and the State Chamber. Supporting DIMER has become an active priority for MSD.

The Delaware Healthcare Association hosted a meeting to address the elimination of funding for DIMER, DIDER, and DIVME. Wayne Smith pointed out that advocating for these programs together may be more effective than separately. He suggested that the dental community may be more connected to support from the legislature, and Sussex County may elicit more support from the veterinary community for DIVME. Mr. Smith also noted that some may not realize that the elimination of funding for DIMER and DIDER also affects the State match for the State Loan Repayment Program (SLRP). He proposed that hospitals may be more motivated to advocate for DIMER and DIDER if they are aware that SLRP funding was also eliminated. He says it’s important to keep in mind that all of these programs were eliminated from the budget. Mr. Smith also shared that the DHA Board wrote advocacy letters to Governor Markell and Governor-Elect Carney. He also suggested asking the DIMER students and alumni to make phone calls to their legislators, as phone calls can be more powerful than letters. Mr. Townsend asked the DIMER Board to engage legislators at every encounter, to advocate for the restoration of these program funds. He feels as if the DIMER Board has made every effort possible to advocate for the restoration of funds and he remains open to suggestions going forward.

Dr. Jasani provided an update on the DIMER Board subcommittee that was recently tasked with bringing forward recommendations on changing the structure of DIMER. The subcommittee has met on 10/24 and 11/28, and plans to meet at the end of December, on the last Monday of the month at 7:30am. Dr. Jasani suggested that the Board needs a better understanding of the State budget, and has invited Bettina Riveros, former Chair of the DHCC, to explain the State budget at the next subcommittee meeting. Dean Kathleen Matt asked if all of the programs (DIMER, DIDER and DIVME) are under the Department of Education (DOE). Laura Howard explained that the Delaware Institute of Veterinary Medical Education (DIVME) falls under DOE, not the Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS), as do DIMER and DIDER. DIVME received funding from a completely different State division than DIMER and DIDER. Dr. Jasani implied that the consensus of the subcommittee is that DIMER needs to change its current

position, as to not have to go through this every year, and that perhaps DIMER and DIDER should be under DOE, rather than DHSS. Mr. Townsend suggested DIMER go forward with whatever makes the most sense for the sustainability of the program.

Mr. Townsend shared a brief history of DIMER, and how years ago he was invited to speak to the Joint Sunset Committee of the Delaware State Legislature on DIMER, as a UD Board member. He was then appointed Chair to the DIMER Board. However, by June 2018 Mr. Townsend will no longer be on the Board at UD, so DIMER needs to consider who might be the next DIMER Board Chair. Mr. Townsend's goal before his time ends as DIMER Board Chair is to come up with a long term plan that will address DIMER funding, as to not pass down this burden to the next Board Chair. Mr. Townsend shared his vision, to broaden the scope of DIMER to include all Delaware hospitals and educational institutions, such as, Delaware State University and Delaware Technical Community College. He suggested that the Board can leverage the relationships they have with some of these institutions; however, they would need to consider how DIMER benefits those institutions. Perhaps the DHA, as a 501 c3 organization, can seek funding on DIMER's behalf, possibly from health insurance payers like Highmark BC/BS, or from Tobacco funds. A \$50-60 million endowment would be ideal to sustain DIMER. DIMER needs to organize itself in a way that legislators would feel comfortable putting money in to it.

On an added note, Mr. Townsend pointed out that several terms on the DIMER Board of Directors have expired, and there is a need to update term appointments. However, we will continue until the new Governor takes action with Board appointments.

*Action items:* The DIMER Board is to share advocacy tools with DIMER students and alumni, as well as continue advocacy efforts with legislators, DIMER alumni colleagues, and professional associations and societies.

The DIMER Board subcommittee is to meet in late December, to gain a better understanding of the DIMER, DIDER, and DIVME programs and the State budget.

### **UPDATE ON STATE LOAN REPAYMENT PROGRAM**

Laura Howard shared a brief update on the State Loan Repayment Program (SLRP). Due to the lack of funding, no new SLRP applications are being accepted at this time. The DHCC currently only has enough money in the budget to execute current contracts. Mr. Townsend pointed out that the DHCC would have had to cancel some contacts if the grants-in-aid funding had not come through for DIMER. DHCC is working with their Loan Repayment Program Federal Project Officer to consider ways to continue supporting SLRP in Delaware. Ms. Howard says they are working on potential ideas; including the possibility of the medical institutions providing the matching funds to the federal program funding. However, there are limiting factors, such as, the Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) that benefit from the participating SLRP medical professionals, may not have the funds available to provide a match. Dean Matt posed the idea, if various medical institutions, or others, could provide funding to the DHSA, the DHSA could support the matching funds for SLRP participants at the FQHCs. She further suggested creating a simple brochure or one-page document that would provide State legislators with the philosophy, program impact, and explanations of the DIMER, DIDER, and, DIVME programs. The idea would be to provide a clear explanation of how these programs support the development of healthcare providers in the State, that no one could deny, as her belief is that funding was eliminated due to a lack of understanding. Mr. Smith suggested that all of the programs that were cut were intentionally selected because they were programs that did not directly affect State employees, and it was an election year. Presumably, this should not be an issue next year, as it will not be an election year.

*Action item:* DIMER is to create a simple document that can be used to clearly explain the DIMER, DIDER, and, DIVME programs.

## **OTHER BUSINESS AND BOARD MEMBER UPDATES**

Deborah Hamilton, of Cozen O'Connor, reported that her team has met with Delaware legislators and the Governor, as well as with DIMER alumni, on behalf of the participating DIMER schools, Sidney Kimmel and PCOM. Cozen O'Connor is actively lobbying for the restoration of DIMER funding and participating in various advocacy efforts.

Dr. Brian Aboff informed the Board that Dr. Virginia Collier, former DIMER Board member and champion for DIMER students entering residency programs, will retire from Christiana Hospital on January 1<sup>st</sup>. The Board congratulated her and sends best wishes.

Dr. David Barlow shared that the Center for Premedical Health and Professional Studies at UD has moved to a permanent location in Pearson Hall. Mr. Townsend asked for an update on the Medical and Dental Scholars Program at UD. Dr. Barlow stated that 13 students were interviewed for the early admittance/acceptance program at Sidney Kimmel and 12 were offered admittance. Since 2008, the scholars program has a 92% success rate for students gaining medical school acceptance, for Post-grad Year 2 students, and about 75% for Post-grad Year 1 students. There is also a growing percentage of scholars gaining acceptance to the Post-Baccalaureate Certificate program at PCOM. About 50-60% of the scholars are Delaware residents.

Deborah Benvenger provided a brief update on Delaware student admission applications to PCOM. At this time, PCOM has received 53 primary applications from Delaware residents, which are in various stages of completion. PCOM has accepted 17 students so far, and of those, 11 applicants have confirmed acceptance. This group of applicants has until December 15<sup>th</sup> to confirm acceptance. The application process will continue into the spring, and matriculation numbers are not final until classes start in August. Ms. Benvenger will continue to keep the Board updated.

Shebra Hall shared the advocacy tools that were prepared by the DHCC with the Board Members, which included an advocacy letter template, a DIMER budget narrative, and contact information for the Delaware legislature. These advocacy tools were sent out electronically prior to the Board meeting, but will be sent out again via email. Ms. Hall also informed the Board that Dr. Lisa Maxwell is out on maternity leave, following the birth of her son in November.

Dean Matt shared that today, December 7th, was the inauguration of the new UD President, Dr. Dennis Assanis. In honor of the inauguration, Vice President Joe Biden visited the University today. In Dr. Assanis' speech, he announced that the College of Health Science would be expanding, with a 10-story tower going up on the STAR Campus. Dean Matt also shared that the Communication Services and Communication Disorders program, which is in its first year, has 27 students in Speech Studies. The program is getting ready for its second year, and though applications are due in February, it has already received 200 applications.

Mr. Smith reiterated the importance of getting DIMER, DIDER and DIVME funding reinstated in the State budget. He appealed to the Board to appeal to Governor Markell to reinstate the funding in his budget recommendation for the incoming administration, and to communicate with Governor-Elect Carney, as he comes in.

Dr. David Paskin participated in the meeting via teleconference, but admitted he was unable to hear most of the meeting, other than Mr. Townsend. Mr. Townsend stated we would try to address that issue for future meetings. Dr. Vincent Lobo, who also participated in the meeting via teleconference, shared that he was very impressed at the enthusiasm of the DIMER students at the dinner at Sidney Kimmel, and that the presenters, including Mr. Townsend and Dr. Paskin were inspiring. Dr. Lobo also suggests that getting the DIMER students engaged will be very important to our advocacy efforts.

## **ADJOURN**

Mr. Townsend wished the Board happy holidays and adjourned the meeting at 4:55pm.