

Delaware Health Care Commission
DELAWARE INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL EDUCATION & RESEARCH (DIMER)
Board of Directors
February 17, 2017

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

MEETING MINUTES

Board Members Present: Sherman Townsend, Chairman; Michael Alexander, MD; David Barlow, PhD; Katherine Collison, MSM; Neil Jasani, MD, MBA; Chuan-Shue Lee; Vincent Lobo, Jr., DO; Lisa Maxwell, MD; 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 (SKMC) (via teleconference)

Staff Present: Laura Howard and Shebra Hall, Delaware Health Care Commission (DHCC)

Other Guests: Mark Thompson, Medical Society of Delaware (MSD)

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Sherman Townsend called the meeting to order at 4:17 p.m.

Mr. Townsend introduced a new Board member, Katherine Collison, from the Delaware Department of Public Health (DPH). Ms. Collison was appointed to the DIMER Board by Dr. Rattay, DPH Director.

APPROVAL OF SEPTEMBER 28 AND DECEMBER 7, 2016 MEETING MINUTES

Wayne Smith motioned to approve the September 28 and December 7 meeting minutes. Dr. Neil Jasani seconded the motion. None opposed. The motion was carried.

UPDATE ON DIMER ADVOCACY EFFORTS

Mr. Townsend informed the Board that funding for DIMER is in Governor Markell's budget proposal for Fiscal Year 2018. However, the Joint Finance Committee (JFC) meets jointly in February and March for public hearings on State agency budget requests. Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) Cabinet Secretary, Dr. Kara Odom Walker testified at the budget hearing on February 7th. Mr. Townsend stated that she gave him a positive impression and appears to be a champion for DIMER. Laura Howard also testified at the budget hearing and did a great job of advocating for DIMER funding and answering questions. Mr. Townsend, Dr. Lisa Maxwell, and Mark Thompson also attended the budget hearing and testified on behalf of DIMER. Mr. Townsend fielded questions and answered them accordingly; Dr. Maxwell also testified, and brought a DIMER student who also gave an impressive testimony; and Mr. Thompson spoke about the economic impact DIMER has on Delaware. The JFC seems to be on board with supporting DIMER, but the budget they are considering was the proposal from Governor Markell. Governor Carney will submit his budget proposal on March 25th, so in the meantime, we will continue with advocacy efforts.

The advocacy group formed by Mr. Smith and the Delaware Health Association (DHA) has another meeting planned next week. The DHCC has emailed letters to the current DIMER students on behalf of DIMER, asking them to contact their legislators about DIMER funding. Mr. Townsend said he is pleased with the support for DIMER, but we will need to continue to inform and educate legislators and the public about the importance of DIMER. A special election for the 10th Senate district seat will be taking place later this month. Depending on the results of this election, JFC leadership could change, and thus alter the sway of JFC support for DIMER.

There are various questions and concerns that have come from legislators regarding DIMER. Mr. Smith suggested that Governor Carney may submit two budgets in March; one will be based on revenue, to close the

budget gap; while the other may be on ways to cut down on expenditures. He also met with the Speaker of the House and about a dozen legislators from Sussex County. These delegates have a high interest in the State Loan Repayment Program (SLRP) for DIMER and DIDER. They also questioned whether we can require DIMER participants to practice in Delaware. Mr. Townsend reminded the Board that DIMER sponsored a grant-loan program for several years that required DIMER participants to return to Delaware and practice in Pediatrics, OB/GYN, or Family Practice. This program had substantial tax implications, and caused significant problems for students who were asked to commit to these specialties, but changed their career path or left Delaware, and had to pay back the loan. Mr. Townsend agreed that there were good intentions with this method, but it was not executed successfully. Dr. James Richards asked how many of the DIMER participants from Kent and Sussex Counties return to Kent and Sussex to practice? Mr. Townsend answered that out of the 170 DIMER physicians practicing in Delaware, about 35 are in Kent and Sussex Counties. He suggested that in spite of the various recruitment efforts, some of which invite foreign doctors to the state, it is difficult to attract physicians to Kent and Sussex Counties, primarily because of the lack of job opportunities for spouses.

There are still opportunities to continue advocacy efforts. Mr. Smith suggested that even in small districts, legislators want to please their constituents, so personal appeals from a few can still make an impact. Dr. David Paskin suggested that Delaware hospitals can also make a powerful statement. He stated that the quality of medical care delivered in Delaware is reinforced by the proximity and relationship with SKMC and PCOM. Dr. Michael Alexander asked about data on medical student electives and externships in Delaware hospitals, to which Dr. Paskin added that students are also doing core rotations at the hospitals. Dr. Maxwell answered that there are currently 22 third-year students in the Christiana Care Health System (CCHS) Delaware branch campus for SKMC. Half of these students are DIMER participants, and the other half are primarily recruited by their Delaware peers. Dr. Jasani added that there were 600 residency rotations in Delaware last year and 70% of those were DIMER students from SKMC. Mr. Thompson affirmed that DIMER does have valuable data to share and we need to continue to differentiate what makes DIMER so vital to Delaware.

Mr. Thompson shared two potential issues for DIMER that he has encountered; that DIMER is a program for rich doctor's kids and although DIMER is important, it should not be supported by state funding. For years, the JFC has questioned the notion that DIMER is a program designed to help the children of already well-established physicians, go to medical school. Mr. Townsend suggested that this question lacks merit because DIMER funding does not actually go to the students, and that any tuition assistance that is offered through DIMER is determined by a needs-based formula developed by the schools. Furthermore, if there are legacy medical students that return to their family practice or home community to practice medicine in Delaware, that should be considered a benefit. The student that Dr. Maxwell brought to the JFC hearing had a profound impact in support of DIMER and addressed this question, as well. Her statement that there are no other doctors in her family, and that medical school might not have even been an option for her without DIMER, was a very effective testimony. Hopefully other DIMER students will respond to the letter that was sent to them and add to this advocacy effort.

This led to a discussion about others who may be interested in advocating for DIMER. A letter similar to the one that was sent to the DIMER students could be sent to their parents, as they are still constituents residing in Delaware. Dr. Maxwell and Mr. Smith suggested that parents may need some background education and information on DIMER and the funding issue, as well as direct contact information for their appropriate legislators. Ms. Howard suggested that this may be a little harder to propose, as their children are already in medical school. Mr. Thompson suggested that the parents of students who are in pre-medical "explorer post" type programs, may also be interested, as this affects their child's future opportunity in medical school. Dr. David Barlow added that medical scholars at the University of Delaware (UD) would also be another group of potential supporters. The data on the DIMER admittance rate in to SKMC and PCOM would be of interest to these populations. They could argue that Delaware students deserve the same opportunity and access to medical school as students in the other 49 states. As we know, without DIMER, Delaware would be the only state in the country without a state-supported medical school or matriculation agreement. Dr. Alexander added that the DIMER fact sheet can be tweaked for parents and students, and asked if personal communication with legislators would be appropriate. Mr. Townsend encouraged the Board to leverage their contacts and relationships with Delaware legislators, and the more that reach out to them, the better. Mr. Townsend suggested that all of the letters and advocacy initiatives be sent out by the 1st of May, in time for the Delaware

legislators' budget markup. Mr. Townsend thanked SKMC and PCOM for sending letters of support for DIMER to the JFC.

Ms. Howard stated that the JFC seemed genuinely supportive of DIMER, particularly Senator Nicole Poore, but there is the additional challenge of not just requesting that DIMER funding not be eliminated from the State budget, but requesting that it be added to the general fund. Since DIMER was not funded in the general fund for Fiscal Year 2017, but from the Grants-in-Aid bill, our challenge is to ask for DIMER to be added in to the Fiscal Year 2018 budget, in the face of a \$350 million budget deficit. However, we will continue to keep support for DIMER on the Governor's agenda and continue with our advocacy efforts. Mr. Townsend agreed that this will be a challenge, but we have a powerful constituency, the continued support from the Board, and hope to have a champion in the JFC.

UPDATE FROM THE SUBCOMMITTEE

Dr. Jasani provided an update on the DIMER Board Subcommittee. The subcommittee met in February and has made great progress over the past 3 meetings. They will be ready to submit their recommendations at the next DIMER Board meeting in May. Their tasks were to bring forward recommendations on how they would theoretically design a medical school for Delaware, and discuss potential grounds for creating legislation to change the make-up of DIMER, or to leave it as is. Fundamental changes will not be made during this time of budget unrest, but perhaps in the fall. After about 20 years as the Board Chair, Mr. Townsend would like to leave DIMER in the best position possible, so this discussion will be important. Mr. Townsend encouraged all Board members to attend the next quarterly meeting on May 17th.

OTHER BUSINESS

Admissions update from PCOM

Deborah Benvenger shared that PCOM has received over 9,400 applications. They received 55 primary applications from Delaware applicants, and 47 have submitted their supplemental applications. They have interviewed 34 applicants and 20 applicants have been accepted to date. Eighteen applicants have accepted and confirmed their place in the incoming class of students. Remaining applicants still have until March 1st to submit their supplemental applications, so the number of accepted students could change. Ms. Benvenger is pleased with how DIMER applicants are succeeding through the application process.

Final Remarks

Dr. Lobo suggested that DIMER alumni from PCOM and SKMC could potentially reach out to current students one-on-one about advocating for DIMER. Alumni could encourage students to write letters to their legislators, and also help them engage their parents in the process as well.

Dr. Barlow stated that the number of students interested in pursuing medicine appears to be increasing, and all seem to be interested in the future of DIMER. He said that out of all of the medical students, only a few are legacy students, as the majority do not have parents that are physicians. Dr. Barlow added that medical school applicants need to stand out and show a demonstrated passion for learning, so UD is establishing some experiential undergraduate courses that will earn students state and national certifications. UD will be offering courses in Emergency Medicine and Medical Scribe certifications.

NEXT MEETING

Hearing no other business, Mr. Townsend reminded Board members of the next meeting, scheduled for Wednesday, May 17, 2017 at 4:00 p.m., at the University of Delaware STAR Campus, Conference Room 113.

ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 5:05 p.m.