

Fairmont State University Legislative Advocacy Report

2020/2021

Report

Prepared by Dr. William Harrison Chair

August 30, 2021

Early Spring Semester 2021 Dr. William Harrison replaced Dr. Harry Baxter as Chair of the Legislative Advocacy Committee

March 11, 2021 trip to Charleston

Galen Hansen and I (Dr. Harrison hereby known as I) traveled down to Charleston (Thursday March 11, 2021) to meet with legislators. We met with Delegates Barbara Evans Fleischauer (D) Monongalia, Danielle Walker (D) Monongalia, Jim Barach (D) Kanawha, and Guy Ward (R) Marion in their offices and met with Phil Mallow (R) Marion in the hall. We also met with Senators Mike Caputo (D) Marion and Patricia Puertas Rucker (R) Jefferson (chair of the Senate Education Committee.) We attempted to meet more legislators today but their schedules were full and/or they were unable to return my earlier call for an appointment.

We focused on four main issues:

1) HEPC: In this I was surprised to be told that Fairmont already had an HEPC exemption but that we had not yet applied. (I don't know if this is true)

2) The income tax elimination and its potential impact on higher ed. funding and the promise scholarship: We were told by Chairwoman Rucker it would be phased in over time and that the budget of the state will be sound. Democrats who we talked to disagreed and feel this is a potential problem. There does seem to be support for the Promise Scholarship but it might possibly contain drug testing.

3) The merger: Legislators seem to be on the fence just wanting what “works.” One legislator mentioned that there is a possibility the accrediting agency might refuse to accredit the new combination should it go through. (In the ensuing months Fairmont and Pierpont formally separated and there was no merger)

4) There were questions posed to legislators about the Board of Governors holding closed meetings that could not be observed by the Fairmont Community. The legislators listened and some said they would look into this.