

## MINUTES

### **Land of Sky P20 Council: Joint Executive Committee & Steering Committee**

December 16, 2022: 10-11 AM

#### **Present:**

Dr. Michael Dempsey, Dr. Mark Dickerson, Dr. Joseph Fox (Contractor), Dr. John Gossett, Dr. Laura Leatherwood, Dr. Gene Loflin, Greg Lowe, Emily Nicholson (Staff), Nathan Ramsey, Dr. William Sederburg, Deborah Tibbetts

#### **Minutes:**

- Mrs. Nicholson asked Mr. Lowe if he would begin the meeting and said she would take over at the right time. Mr. Lowe said he didn't have any updates, so he yielded back to Mrs. Nicholson.
- Mrs. Nicholson welcomed attendees, acknowledged their busy schedules, and thanked them for their time. Mrs. Nicholson had been sharing her screen with the agenda showing, and she briefly reviewed the format and contents of the agenda, beginning with the updates from the December action team meetings.
- Dr. Loflin asked Mrs. Nicholson about the attendance levels at the action team meetings and said he had noted at his own action team's recent meeting that attendance had been low. Mrs. Nicholson replied that both Dr. Loflin's action team and the Credentials action team had had low attendance this time, which had been unusual. She said that attendance had been about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the members at their prior meetings, which had been held two months earlier. Mrs. Nicholson said that, besides the two aforementioned action teams, all of the action team meetings were well-attended this time and had good discussions. She shared that her request to action team members to send designees if they are unable to attend has been most successful with UNCA and WCU. She solicited input regarding the action teams from the committee.
- Dr. Loflin reiterated his suggestion, previously emailed to Mrs. Nicholson, that this committee review the action team structure to ensure that they consist of "doers" rather than "decision-makers," with the latter more appropriate for the P20 Council. He shared his observation that, for his action team (FAFSA), Mrs. Nicholson seemed to be the only "doer," and he expressed his concern about that arrangement being unsustainable.
- Mrs. Nicholson agreed with Dr. Loflin's observation and suggestion. Dr. Fox recommended choosing action team members below the VP level in order to find the "doers." Dr. Dempsey commented that the committee would have an opportunity to recommend people for those positions when they complete their homework from this meeting. Mrs. Nicholson confirmed Dr. Dempsey's point, and she agreed with Dr. Fox's recommendation.
- Mrs. Nicholson asked whether there were any other questions or comments regarding the action teams. There was no input, so Mrs. Nicholson moved on to the second item on the agenda.

- Mrs. Nicholson reminded the committee that Mr. Gentry will no longer be serving in his official position in Madison County and, therefore, will also not be serving on the P20 Council any longer. She asked whether the committee would like her to meet with his interim replacement, Mr. Honeycutt, to explain P20 to him and invite him to join the Council, or whether they would like her to reach out to any other government officials in Madison.
- Dr. Dempsey advocated for connecting with Mr. Honeycutt. Mr. Ramsey informed the committee that the Madison County Commissioners had appointed Mr. Honeycutt as the Interim County Manager to replace Mr. Gentry, who had also been serving in an interim capacity. Mr. Ramsey also recommended Mrs. Nicholson reach out to Mr. Honeycutt. Dr. Loflin suggested that Mr. Honeycutt might be able to suggest other people that Mrs. Nicholson could connect with about the Council.
- Dr. Leatherwood asked whether Dr. Mark Garrett, the new Superintendent at Henderson County Public Schools, had been welcomed by the Council, and Mrs. Nicholson affirmed that he had and shared that the two of them had had several helpful conversations already. Dr. Leatherwood shared that Dr. Garrett also serves as a commissioner on the myFutureNC team for superintendents.
- Mrs. Nicholson updated the team about forthcoming meetings with two potential new Council members who would be replacing their predecessors: Dr. Rob Jackson, the new Superintendent for Buncombe County Schools, with Dr. Gossett later this afternoon, and Kimberly van Noort, the Interim Chancellor at UNCA, with Dr. Dempsey some time in January. Mrs. Nicholson expressed her optimism that Dr. Jackson will join the Council.
- Dr. Sederburg said that Ms. van Noort serves with him on the NC Arboretum board and others, and has a strong commitment to WNC. He speculated that she will likely be considered for the full Chancellor position. He agreed to facilitate scheduling a meeting for Mrs. Nicholson and Dr. Dempsey with Ms. van Noort if necessary.
- Dr. Sederburg noted that UNCA currently has an interim chancellor, an interim provost, and three new deans, and so much high-level turnover has led to uncertainty at the institution. He further remarked that both retention and enrollment at UNCA are down.
- Mrs. Nicholson asked whether there were any other questions or comments, and since there was no input, she moved on to the third item on the agenda. She shared on her screen a document with proposed meeting dates and locations for the P20 Council for and for this committee for 2023. She asked whether there were any conflicts with the P20 Q1 meeting (1/26/2023 in Madison), and there were a few. The committee agreed to reschedule the Q1 meeting for 2/2/2023. Dr. Leatherwood asked if the Q2 meeting in Henderson could be rescheduled from 4/13 to 4/14, and she offered to host it at BRCC. Dr. Dempsey asked what time the meetings would be held, and Mrs. Nicholson said 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. She added the time to the document with the revised scheduled meeting dates. The committee briefly discussed lunch options for during the meetings. Due to scheduling conflicts the Q3 meeting was rescheduled from 7/20 to 7/14, and the Q4

meeting was rescheduled from 11/16 to 11/17.

- Mrs. Nicholson next asked this committee whether they would like to keep meeting on the 3rd Thursday/Friday of each month. The committee agreed to meet on the 3rd Friday of each month. Mrs. Nicholson stated she will send email invitations for all of the 2023 meetings for both the full P20 Council and this committee.
- Mrs. Nicholson transitioned to the fourth agenda item. She briefly recounted the history of Dr. Loflin, Dr. Sederburg, and Dr. Dempsey's involvement on the Steering Committee for the Collaborative, which preceded the formation of P20. She further explained that some members of the Steering Committee were also in the roster of the P20, but not all. She asked Dr. Sederburg, Dr. Dempsey, and Dr. Loflin to share their thoughts about their future involvement, if any, with P20.
- Dr. Sederburg said he would be willing to stay or to leave as the group saw fit. He recommended Dr. Dempsey continue to be involved, and Dr. Dempsey stated that he would like to continue because he has been serving since the inception of the Collaborative. Dr. Leatherwood asked why the committee would be considering turning away members, and she urged the committee to follow a policy of inclusion and not exclusion.
- Dr. Loflin informed the committee that he had initially broached this subject with Mrs. Nicholson, and he referenced a discussion with Dr. Fox when the Collaborative was creating the P20 Council and when some of the Collaborative members had realized they would not be part of the P20 Council. Dr. Loflin expressed that he would be willing to continue to serve, potentially in one or more of the action teams, and he also voiced his concern that he would not be an appropriate member for the P20 Council because he does not have decision-making power, and the Council was intentionally created with a roster solely of decision-makers.
- Mrs. Nicholson suggested either an advisory capacity or an ad hoc position for the Executive Committee. Dr. Dempsey and Dr. Loflin both expressed approval of those options. Mrs. Nicholson noted how valuable the insights and contributions of Dr. Dempsey, Dr. Loflin, and Dr. Sederburg had all been to the work. Mrs. Nicholson acknowledged that the intent for the roster of the Council had been to include only one representative from each organization and for that representative to be a decision-maker, and she commented that she was not aware of any problems with including Dr. Dempsey, Dr. Loflin, and Dr. Sederburg in the P20 roster while they also continued to serve in advisory roles for the Executive Committee.
- Dr. Fox suggested that the committee not make a decision at this time. He recommended the three individuals in question remain in their positions for 6, 8, or 12 more months, to promote sustainability of P20. When sustainable funding has been secured and when the P20 Council roster is stable, with expected rotations in and out as organizations experience leadership changes, the decision could be revisited. He recommended abiding by Dr. Leatherwood's suggestion of favoring inclusion until such time as P20 is sustainable. Mrs. Nicholson agreed and indicated she would

continue to include the three on invitations to both the meetings of both this committee and the full P20 Council.

- Mrs. Nicholson moved on to the fifth item on the agenda. She informed the committee that some of the \$100,000 recently received from JMBE will be used to recruit six student ambassadors: two each from secondary, postsecondary (community college level), and postsecondary (university level). Once the stipend process has been finalized, Mrs. Nicholson will be requesting recommendations from this committee for those positions. Dr. Fox asked whether they could be recent graduates, and Mrs. Nicholson said that status had not been ruled out. Mrs. Nicholson voiced her uncertainty about whether the positions will be competitive.
- Mrs. Nicholson next shared about \$35,000 in funding recently received from Duke Energy to be used in a discretionary way. The funds must first be approved as a budget amendment in late January before they can be used.
- Next Mrs. Nicholson updated the committee on the \$1 million in funding awarded from DOL in September, 2022, to develop training programs at A-B Tech and BRCC. She expressed her frustration with the slow pace of those funds being released. She asked whether the committee had any questions.
- Since there were no responses, she moved on to the next agenda item. She gave a brief update on the final NC IMPACT forum she had attended last week along with Dr. Dempsey and Mr. Ramsey in New Bern, including having heard a commitment from Scotty at Dogwood to continue supporting the work of the local collaboratives. She said P20 will be able to seek funding from Dogwood when their application process is open in Q1 of 2023.
- Mrs. Nicholson refreshed the committee on a prior discussion regarding potential funding opportunities with Lumina in which they had decided to pursue regional articulation in partnership with the school systems. She said the initiative is stalled currently. Dr. Loflin informed the team that the NC Community College System is currently looking at high school to community college articulation on a statewide level, and he said they have encountered many challenges. He further stated that he had been informed that, if the statewide effort fails, individual community colleges will be instructed to create local articulation agreements, which he expects would occur quickly. Mrs. Nicholson asked Dr. Loflin whether he thought the statewide effort would pass, and he replied with details on some of the barriers, including that NCDPI had instituted project-based measurement, which is grading just by instructors with no standardization, and which many colleges have expressed concerns about adopting. He further shared that his academic leadership at A-B Tech had met recently and decided to vote no as a college on any that had project-based measurements and any courses that are transfer in nature (because they require masters degrees to be taught).

- Dr. Dempsey asked whether the discussion was about the Comprehensive Articulation Agreement, and Dr. Loflin said it was not. Dr. Loflin identified it as the state agreement that has existed for some time. He explained that the articulation agreement currently endows individual colleges with the authority to decide which courses they will give credit for, while the proposed changes would automate much of those decisions at the state level, while still allowing for final say by the colleges including by allowing them to require additional documentation before awarding credit. He provided details of some of the political challenges the effort has encountered. Dr. Dempsey asked when voting would occur, and Dr. Loflin replied by the end of January. Mrs. Nicholson asked Dr. Loflin to keep her updated, and he said he would. Dr. Loflin also informed the committee that A-B Tech and BRCC would be meeting in January to discuss whether they can agree on a regional, unified response to the outcome of the vote on the articulation agreement.
- Mrs. Nicholson transitioned to the next agenda item. She provided background information on what FAFSA is, reminded the committee that P20 has an action team for FAFSA completions and explained some of their efforts, and she explained some of the challenges with FAFSA completion and potential impact of increasing those completion rates. She indicated it is not a graduation requirement in NC and noted there was a bill proposed to require it for charter school graduation, but that bill did not pass. Mrs. Nicholson stated that myFutureNC has not yet taken a formal position on the issue, and she presented the team with a question from Mr. Ramsey about whether it might be helpful to initiate a discussion of the issue with superintendents.
- Dr. Gossett remarked that it could be helpful to find out why some superintendents do not support requiring FAFSA completion for graduation, and he said he and Mrs. Nicholson could discuss the issue with Dr. Jackson at their meeting this afternoon.
- Mr. Ramsey suggested the concern might be due to such a requirement being too prescriptive, and he proposed a resolution of allowing exceptions and waivers such that no student would not be allowed to graduate solely for not completing a FAFSA. He stressed the importance of increasing guidance and advising support for students and families to prepare and complete FAFSAs. He deferred to Dr. Leatherwood and Dr. Gossett for their close relationships with their superintendents.
- Dr. Dempsey supported having the discussion with the superintendents, and he agreed with Mr. Ramsey in that the message should not be adversarial.
- Dr. Sederburg asked whether taking the ACT was required for graduation, and Mrs. Nicholson said no. Dr. Sederburg said that the ACT was another indicator of whether a student would succeed in college, and other states have that mandate and have seen some success. He agreed with Mr. Ramsey's suggestion that exceptions and waivers be allowed, and he shared his experience as a legislator when his state did not require FAFSA completion because it was too burdensome for some students and families.

- Dr. Loflin suggested confirming whether the ACT is required because it had been required for juniors previously. Mr. Ramsey said he thought it still is required, and Mrs. Nicholson replied that she thought it was up to local school boards, and the local boards might require it.
- Mrs. Nicholson advocated for sticking with FAFSA rather than pushing ACT. Dr. Loflin encouraged meeting with the superintendents to assess their support for a pilot test with just one high school in which they don't require FAFSA completion but do really support and encourage it. He suggested beginning with a school with the lowest FAFSA completion rate. Dr. Sederburg asked Dr. Loflin whether it would be possible to determine the amount of college financial aid untapped on a per-school basis, and Mrs. Nicholson replied that she had previously been told it was not possible.
- Mrs. Nicholson told the committee the email she had sent them recently only included national figures for unclaimed financial aid due to FAFSAs not being completed. She has tried to find figures for NC as a state, and she said that JMBE and some of their supporting senators are working on pilot projects for FAFSA completions, which they call FAFSA Sprints, including one in Transylvania County. Mrs. Nicholson added that the FAFSA Sprints were being implemented in areas with the lowest FAFSA completion rates in the state.
- Dr. Loflin reiterated his support for setting up a meeting with the superintendents in the four counties to gauge their support for a pilot to improve FAFSA completions, and he told Mrs. Nicholson to seek support from any of the committee members as necessary. Mrs. Nicholson agreed. Mrs. Nicholson sought the team's input on whether the meetings should be with individual superintendents or whether it should be a group discussion with them all. Dr. Dempsey advocated for meeting with them as a group. Dr. Sederburg suggested meeting with them individually with the hope of finding a champion supporter among them.
- Mrs. Nicholson moved on to the final agenda item, which she had brought up at the prior meeting. She refreshed the committee on her and Dr. Fox's need for more streamlined data that can be used to report to funders on the efforts of P20, and she indicated that the agenda contained an embedded link to a draft of a survey to collect that data quarterly from P20 membership. She tasked this committee with reviewing the draft survey and providing feedback; she would like to be able to share the survey with the P20 membership at their next meeting in January.
- Mrs. Nicholson solicited any final input from the committee. Dr. Fox informed the team that he is seeking examples of successes and efforts that can be included in an updated case study, particularly outcomes such as completions. He stated he is almost finished with the draft of the case study and still needs some data on completions, career expos, and similar efforts. He suggested that JMBE might be asking soon for P20 to quantify how many more credentials of the initial goal of 10,000 are left to be obtained. He stressed the need for P20 members to report such data to Mrs. Nicholson and himself. Mrs. Nicholson wrapped up the meeting.

**Next Meeting Date:** Friday, January 20, 2023 from 10-11 AM