

MINUTES

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

April 21, 2023: 10-11 AM

Present:

Dr. Joseph Fox (Contractor), Dr. Mike Dempsey, Dr. Laura Leatherwood, Dr. Gene Loflin, Emily Nicholson (Staff), Nathan Ramsey, Dr. William Sederburg, Deb Tibbetts

Minutes:

- Mrs. Nicholson opened the meeting and passed facilitation to Dr. Fox.
- Dr. Fox provided background on sustainability plans generally and on the sustainability plan he created for the P20 Council specifically, including the necessity to include not just on financial sustainability but other domains as well. He stated that the focus of today's meeting would be on the recommendations in the sustainability plan and on developing a work plan from them for Mrs. Nicholson.
- Dr. Fox began sharing his screen with the P20 Council sustainability plan's operational sustainability recommendations page showing. He identified the goals of sustainability as defining effective and efficient operations generally, and as creating innovative credentials' initiatives aligned to the labor force's needs, and developing long-term and diverse funding streams, with the last two specifically for the P20 Council.
- Dr. Fox explained his recommendations for additional staff positions, which had come out of questions from and discussions with representatives from Belk. He said that the proposed job titles were based on suggestions from Belk and that they were open to change at this committee's discretion, and he listed a few of the functions of each position. He distinguished between marketing and public relations, which is a subset of marketing that is focused on messaging. Dr. Fox asserted the need for this additional staff support for Mrs. Nicholson, as fulfilling all of these functions and tasks is too much for one person.
- Next Dr. Fox explained his recommendations for enhancing the strategic role of Mrs. Nicholson's duties as Executive Director. He reiterated the role of the P20 Council is to provide support and resources for stakeholders rather than do programming directly, and to advocate for stakeholders' initiatives. He connected these recommendations to this committee's work by stating that this body would need to determine how Mrs. Nicholson can and should provide that support and advocacy for stakeholders.
- Dr. Fox then briefly reviewed his recommendations for enhancing operational effectiveness. He shared about the type of reporting he had done in a prior role as the Executive Director for NC REAL. In addition to his suggestions for the types of reports that Mrs. Nicholson should prepare and for whom, he also suggested that time be allotted in the agenda at P20 Council meetings not only

for Mrs. Nicholson to give updates about her work but for stakeholders to share updates about their initiatives as well.

- Then Dr. Fox referenced the most recent P20 Council meeting and identified gaps in members' understanding of their roles and of the benefits of their membership. He briefly touched on his remaining suggestions for enhancing operational effectiveness for Mrs. Nicholson, which included hiring and leading staff, data collection (particularly pertaining to successes), and leading both policy and funding advocacy efforts. Dr. Fox paused for questions and/or comments from the committee. Ms. Tibbetts remarked that the plan made sense so far.
- Dr. Fox informed the group that the typical process is to begin with a sustainability plan that is presented to the governing body, who then sets priorities and develops a work plan for the leadership team. He noted the additional challenge that the P20 Council has in its sustainability planning because its stakeholders include many different target groups: from early childhood to hiring in the workforce.
- Next Dr. Fox proceeded to explain his program sustainability recommendations. He emphasized that the P20 Council does not itself do programming, but it does advocate for and work to obtain funding for programs on behalf of its members. His recommendations included enhancing alignment with organizations already doing work around innovative hiring practices and prioritizing advocacy work related to a set of specific initiatives, many of which were from the Strategic Plan. Dr. Fox stressed the importance of regularly communicating P20's efficacy to stakeholders and partners.
- Dr. Fox reminded the group that he and Mrs. Nicholson will soon be working with a PR firm, and he again reiterated the differences between PR and marketing. He explained his suggestion for P20 staff to re-engage with statewide educational attainment partners with whom they had lost contact during the pandemic, as these organizations can be sources of best practices that P20 can then share with its stakeholders in its capacity as a resource hub. He briefly listed some of his recommended priorities for education policy advocacy.
- Next Dr. Fox explained his recommendations for financial sustainability, which included identifying appropriate grant opportunities that can be applied for (either to flow through the Land of Sky or to the P20 Council directly as its own 501(c)3), diversifying funding streams, managing multiple grants simultaneously, prioritizing projects based on budget constraints, and projecting future funding needs, particularly for sustainability needs. He explained how grant timelines could be staggered. Dr. Fox emphasized the need to have multiple revenue streams. Dr. Fox stopped sharing his screen and asked whether committee members had any questions.
- Dr. Fox asked how many attendees' organizations created their own sustainability plans, and attendees replied via chat. He gave some examples of types of entities that usually write sustainability plans, which included educational institutions and large nonprofits.

- Mr. Ramsey commented that the work of the P20 Council has been difficult especially with the disruption of the pandemic. He shared some of his observations of a similar organization in Catawba County, and he noted that there are very few examples across the state of multi-county collaboration like the P20 Council, which has both strengths and challenges. Mr. Ramsey voiced his gratitude for the funding that P20 has received from JMBE. He identified the community colleges as the keys to and the center of P20. Mr. Ramsey wondered about the possibility of aligning P20 with the workforce board for funding and sustainability purposes, and he noted Mrs. Nicholson's expertise in this area.
- Dr. Dempsey concurred with Mr. Ramsey's remarks, said further conversation is needed about the organizational structure of P20, and voiced his agreement that the community colleges are the hub of P20. Dr. Dempsey praised Mrs. Nicholson's work to-date and reiterated the need for additional staff support for her.
- Dr. Dempsey expressed his concern that some P20 members had voiced at their last meeting their lack of awareness of their purpose and role in the P20 Council. He reminded attendees of the original goals of the steering committee three years ago and stressed that regional support of the work of myFutureNC needs to remain a primary goal. He said P20 needed a master plan that clearly delineates the roles and responsibilities for local organizations toward achieving that goal, clear communication to the community and stakeholders about the work and successes, and funding that will enable Mrs. Nicholson to grow her staff.
- Dr. Dempsey reiterated the need identified by Dr. Sederburg in a recent email to build leadership capacity among the P20 Council members such that they are empowered to seek grants. Dr. Dempsey requested the steering committee and executive committee meet, without Mrs. Nicholson, whom he said was aware of this request, so they can develop a plan and provide Mrs. Nicholson with firm guidance on achieving those four broad goals he had just outlined.
- Dr. Sederburg expressed a concern that the P20 Council had too much bureaucracy, and he spoke of the need to develop a strong sense of unity and buy-in among Council members. He proposed a meeting with the chancellors, presidents, and other leaders to try to build excitement among them, and he voiced his agreement with Dr. Dempsey's suggestions. He praised Dr. Leatherwood's leadership skills, and asserted that she and Dr. Gossett could provide the necessary leadership to cultivate that collaboration and teamwork among other higher ed leaders.
- Dr. Fox concurred that community colleges are a hub, and he shared a concern that labeling the P20's work as "educational attainment" might have seemed to exclude employers. He spoke of the need to align employers and educational institutions so that employers are included in discussions about their current and future hiring needs in conjunction with the educational institutions who can help develop the programs to support those workforce needs. Dr. Dempsey said Dr. Fox had identified the unifying theme of P20's work, which would appeal to all sectors of the membership.

- Dr. Sederburg shared about his past experiences being part of similar initiatives in different states, and he said both had experienced the same lack of unity between employers and educational leaders. He voiced his doubts that those barriers in engaging and exciting the employer base could be overcome. He cited rough statistics about the numbers of graduates from UNCA and WCU, and the numbers of those who had obtained local jobs, and he said most of the jobs in our region are filled and will continue to be filled by people moving into the region, not coming through the local educational pipeline. He highlighted the importance of open communication and collaboration among P20 members and organizations for their mutually beneficial interests. He concurred with Dr. Dempsey's need to reenergize the Council, and he reminded attendees of the many significant leadership changes that have occurred in the last few years since P20 was formed.
- Dr. Fox shared about his experience overseeing seven departments at an educational institution and the successful partnerships he had built with employers through their roles on advisory committees that met with him twice a year. He spoke of the strengths of those relationships and the mutual benefit they provided for hiring.
- Dr. Leatherwood committed to speaking with Dr. Gossett, and she reminded attendees that she, and other educational institutions, are struggling to find workers just like the other employers are, and that being understaffed limits their ability to educate and train workers. She voiced her confidence that she and Dr. Gossett could reenergize the Council, while stressing the difficulty of multi-county work. She advocated for patience in building these regional partnerships and with expectations on educational institutions specifically in light of the pressures that they are facing.
- Dr. Sederburg proposed Dr. Leatherwood and/or Dr. Gossett could host a teambuilding summit of the leadership. Dr. Leatherwood informed Dr. Sederburg that the summit had been discussed at length at the most recent P20 Council meeting, and she and Dr. van Noort had reported on it to the full Council.
- Dr. Dempsey proposed that the next scheduled meeting of this group, on May 19th, be dedicated to the agenda he had discussed, without Mrs. Nicholson present. The other attendees agreed nonverbally.
- Mrs. Nicholson and Dr. Dempsey coordinated informing the committee members who had been absent from this meeting (Dr. Dickerson, Dr. Gossett, and Mr. Lowe) about the plan for the May 19th meeting. Dr. Dempsey committed to sending an email notification to committee members.
- Mrs. Nicholson thanked Dr. Fox for leading the discussion.

Next Meeting Date: Friday, May 19, 2023 from 10-11 AM