



JOINT LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE
December 5, 2017
Room 643 of the Legislative Office Building

The Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee met on Tuesday, December 5, 2017 at 10:00 AM. The meeting was held in Room 643 of the Legislative Office Building. Members present were: Senator Barefoot, Senator Barringer, Senator Curtis, Senator Horner, Senator Krawiec, Senator Rabin, Senator Smith-Ingram, Senator Tillman, Senator Waddell, Representative Horn, Representative Blackwell, Representative Hurley, Representative Fraley, Representative Grange, Representative Hunter, Representative Lucas, Representative Richardson, Representative Conrad, Representative Jones, Representative Malone, Representative Pittman, Representative Shepard, and Representative Strickland.

Senator Chad Barefoot presided.

Senator Barefoot called the meeting to order and recognized the Sergeants at Arms for their service.

Senator Barefoot introduced Mr. Sean Bulson, Interim Vice President of University & P-12 partnerships with the UNC General Administration. Mr. Bulson presented the committee with the progress being made with the UNC System's lab school program, before taking questions from committee members.

- Representative Horn inquired whether the General Administration had established standardized communication methods with principles to gain feedback on experimental techniques. Mr. Bulson responded that a system was being developed, and that new laboratory schools would be integrated as they were added.
- Representative Horn asked how teachers in laboratory schools were being trained and recruited. Mr. Bulson indicated that most teachers hired by laboratory schools were experienced in the profession, and that there was a robust onboarding process.
- Representative Horn asked what lessons learned from the first laboratory schools could be utilized by the General Assembly to improve future schools launches. Mr. Bulson answered that while there are incremental improvements that can be made based on past launches he did not see a need to request any substantial changes.
- Representative Horn inquired why the number of accepted students was low in comparison to the amount of students who applied. Mr. Bulson responded that most of



the variance was due to families' choosing a different school for their child after beginning the application process.

- Representative Horn remarked that the demographic information regarding laboratory school students was divided solely into "white" and "african-american" and asked if there were any Hispanic students. Mr. Bulson responded that there were a small number of Hispanic students, but that the UNC system had been hesitant to identify such small numbers of students.
- Senator Barringer asked Mr. Bulson to detail the current application process for students. Mr. Bulson responded that the application has been made as simple as possible. Mr. Bulson added that the laboratory schools have worked extensively with local school districts to publicize the schools and recruit students.
- Senator Barringer asked Mr. Bulson how the laboratory schools were reaching out to at-risk children who did not have a parent or guardian willing to fill out an application. Mr. Bulson responded that outreach effort have proactively pursued at-risk students, including home visits.
- Senator Barringer followed up by asking how staff were being instructed to support at-risk students in areas they may not be supported in their homes. Mr. Bulson responded that this was a core element of the schools' designs, with support for counseling, density, and other medical services.
- Senator Waddell inquired what the laboratory schools were planning to do once their third year of funding was expended. Mr. Bulson responded that they currently have reoccurring funding through 5 years, at which point they will be evaluated for success.
- Senator Waddell asked if future laboratory schools would be brand new institutions. Mr. Bulson answered that the two existing laboratory schools were utilizing university-owned space at ECU and WCU. Future plans include utilizing existing space from universities as well as local districts.
- Senator Waddell asked how success would be measured in an evaluation given the wide range of grades and disciplines being emphasized. Mr. Bulson responded that the criteria for success would be decided by the local district and unique based on the focus of each campus; for example ECU focusing on healthcare education.
- Representative Hurley asked whether all of students in laboratory schools had access to experienced teachers. Mr. Bulson replied that every student did, and that new teachers were being specially trained to teach effectively in a laboratory environment.



- Representative Hurley asked if laboratory schools have a significant amount of students from their surrounding communities. Mr. Bulson responded while that students from all parts of a given district are eligible to attend, but the majority of students currently enrolled in the laboratory schools were from communities geographically close to the schools.
- Representative Lucas asked how much emphasis was being placed on parental involvement. Mr. Bulson responded that several strategies to encourage parental involvement had been developed and implemented.
- Representative Fraley inquired what parental feedback had been received regarding classroom experience. Mr. Bulson answered that the feedback received so far had been overwhelmingly positive.
- Representative Fraley followed his last question by asking whether or not there were concerns on the ability to replicate the strong community interaction of the existing lab schools. Mr. Bulson responded that while logistics are always a challenge he is confident in the ability to work with partnering colleges to identify workable solutions.
- Representative Fraley followed up again by asking if specific timelines and individuals had been identified to address logistical challenges such as these. Mr. Bulson answered that his team had been working closely with the Board of Governors to identify who can be most helpful to solve specific problems
- Senator Horner asked Mr. Bulson if the expectation was that the laboratory school program would grow. Mr. Bulson responded that he believed that it would.
- Senator Horner continued by asking what the hopeful result of the laboratory school program is, and how progress towards this goal will be measured. Mr. Bulson answered that student improvement would be a key metric of success, as well as knowledge gained for teacher and principle preparation, as measured through annual formal evaluations.
- Senator Horner asked how school visits and evaluations were conducted for laboratory schools. Mr. Bulson indicated that the majority of each school's oversight was provided by the chancellor of the sponsoring college.
- Representative Conrad inquired if teaching colleges were being provided with feedback on how to prepare students to teach in a laboratory school environment. Mr. Bulson responded that the intention is to establish a strong feedback loop between laboratory schools and teaching colleges, comparing the ideal arrangement to one between a teaching hospital and a medical school. The use of technology such as cameras for remote viewing of classrooms for teaching students was used as an example.



- Representative Blackwell asked whether requirements existed to ensure that laboratory schools pursued unique programs to help low performing students, given the flexibility granted to each laboratory school to be independently overseen. Mr. Bulson responded that while teaching procedures were not centrally mandated, he believed that the relationship between local school districts and sponsoring universities allow for the needs of students to be met and learned from in a new way.
- Representative Blackwell followed up by asking if evaluations would be conducted independently or if the UNC system would be responsible to “evaluate itself.” Mr. Bulson answered that after pursuing proposals for external evaluations a team from UNC-Chapel Hill was selected for further consideration, though nothing had been finalized.
- Representative Blackwell commented that he saw the laboratory schools project as a good opportunity for UNC Chapel Hill to participate in the longitudinal data-sharing system established years prior in a meaningful way.
- Representative Blackwell stated that the primary metric of success and evaluation should be student outcomes, as opposed to teacher or principle preparation.
- Representative Blackwell concluded by saying that the evaluation process should be laid out in a more concise way to avoid missing an opportunity to close what he saw as a thirty-year-old achievement gap.
- Senator Smith-Ingram asked whether socio-economic status was being tracked among the student population. Mr. Bulson indicated that it was being tracked.
- Senator Smith-Ingram followed up by asking if the admissions process was such that students were automatically waitlisted if they applied but were not admitted. Mr. Bulson answered that new students were not currently being enrolled once the school year had begun.
- Senator Smith-Ingram asked whether there were target percentages within the blended teaching model for different experience levels. Mr. Bulson responded that experienced teachers were being pursued as the primary presence in classrooms, with clinical teachers operating alongside them.
- Senator Smith-Ingram asked what steps were being taken to share best practices for teacher and principle professional development. Mr. Bulson answered that the partnership between local school districts and sponsoring institutions allows for practices to be spread outside of the laboratory schools. Evaluation methods that span the UNC System would be employed to ensure that these practices are adaptable to other schools.



- Representative Richardson inquired how advisory boards were formed for laboratory schools. Mr. Bulson answered that the composition process was laid out legislatively, and included community members, schools staff, and local district superintendents.
- Representative Richardson inquired whether the laboratory schools were following a specific education model. Mr. Bulson answered that while there was no specific model, project-based learning was coming to be seen as the most effective strategy.
- Representative Richardson then asked why certain institutions close to Winston Salem were not chosen to host a laboratory school. Mr. Bulson responded that the selection process was “a selection of the willing” and very open to anyone who was interested in becoming involved; with the current laboratory schools being those who have opted-in as partners.
- Senator Rabin asked what strategies were being implemented to reach students whose families were not involved or passionate regarding the child’s education. Mr. Bulson indicated that direct outreach to parents/guardians in the form of home-visits was the current method of monitoring student involvement/progress
- Senator Rabin then asked if the long term vision for the laboratory schools was to continually pass along insights to the rest of the educational system, or cease to operate once specific information was gathered or specific goals were met. Mr. Bulson replied that current legislation required a 5-year evaluation of the effectiveness of laboratory schools, and that based on his experiences it would be difficult to imagine a situation where an effective educational strategy could be declared “finished.”
- Senator Krawiec inquired how many teachers were currently involved in the laboratory school system. Mr. Bulson answered that there were currently 3 fulltime classroom teachers at each campus, with additional “special teachers”
- Senator Krawiec followed up by asking if either laboratory school was utilizing teacher licensing waivers. Mr. Bulson responded that neither was currently using waivers.

Senator Barefoot thanked Mr. Bulson for his presentation and introduced Mrs. Sara Ulm, Director of The North Carolina Teaching Fellows Program at The University of North Carolina. Mrs. Ulm thanked the committee for their support of the newly created North Carolina Teaching Fellows Program and outlined how the participation guidelines had been crafted, as well as detailed preparations being undertaken for the launch of the Teaching Fellows Program. Mrs. Ulm then took questions from members of the committee.

- Senator Tillman asked why Appalachian State University was not selected despite its historic recognition as a teaching college. Senator Barefoot recognized Dr. Mary Ann Danowitz, Dean for the College of Education at North Carolina State University and



chair of the selection commission for the NC Teaching Fellows Program to answer the question. Dean Danowitz explained the selection criteria and process, as well as how they were conceived and molded by the commission with an emphasis on quantitative and indisputable data.

- Representative Richardson inquired why no HBCUs had been selected to participate in the program. Sen. Barefoot responded that the criteria for selection was set forth in legislation he sponsored.
- Senator Smith-Ingram asked why the geographic location of a college was not included within the selection criteria, and if location would be considered now that the program had begun. Mrs. Ulm responded that while the criteria have produced a diverse list of participating institutions it was not the intention to represent specific colleges based on their location.
- Senator Smith-Ingram followed up by asking if members of the selection board were given guidelines for evaluating the colleges objectively. Mrs. Ulm answered that members were provided with specific instructions on how to score each criteria.
- Representative Horn stated that while there are many phenomenal teaching schools in the state these criteria were designed to blindly and objectively select the five institutions which are the “best of the best” and that as the program is continued/expanded adjustments will be made to the criteria.
- Senator Waddell asked why the program was opened up for students who already possessed a bachelor’s degree. Mrs. Ulm explained that the objective was to make the program available for high-quality teachers from any background.
- Senator Waddell followed up by asking if what a student’s options would be if the loan forgiveness amount that the NC Teaching Fellows Program provided was less than the total cost of their education. Mrs. Ulm responded that the program was working with partner colleges to ensure that students had access to financial support.
- Senator Horner asked if the evaluation results would be released for all colleges who submitted their teaching program for consideration for the NC Teaching Fellows Program. Mrs. Ulm responded that the results of all evaluations and were being kept confidential.
- Senator Horn was recognized for a statement, and said that he believed the NC Teaching Fellows Program was a “great program”
- Representative Blackwell asked what the criteria was for students to receive loan forgiveness. Mrs. Ulm answered that it varied on their final teaching assignment, with the incentives being geared towards low performing schools
- Representative Blackwell followed up by asking if data on NC Teaching Fellows graduates from private colleges would be continuously collected. Mrs. Ulm responded that each and every fellow’s performance would be tracked on an individual basis.
- Representative Blackwell stated that private colleges should be encouraged to adopt a consistent process to share data
- Representative Horn asked how candidates are selected after they submit an application. Mrs. Ulm responded that selection was based on 6 criteria: academic achievement, experience, an essay, a mission statement, and two in-person interviews.



- Representative Horn followed up by asking if the selection criteria commission was also responsible for candidate selection. Mrs. Ulm answered that the commission was responsible for both.
- Senator Rabin was recognized for a statement, and he complimented Mrs. Ulm for her work so far, saying that the planning and rollout for the NC Teaching Fellows Program was the best he had ever seen.


Senator Barefoot thanked Mrs. Ulm for her presentation and introduced Mr. Scott Shook, Chair of The State Board of Community Colleges, and Ms. Jennifer Haygood, Acting President of the NC Community College System. Mr. Shook detailed the current search for a permanent system president, as well as the preferred qualities of the ideal candidate. Ms. Haygood presented the strategic plan developed by the Community College System to ensure that its institutions were prepared to train a cutting-edge workforce in the coming years.

- Representative Blackwell asked whether the community college system was looking at performance-based funding models, where programs/schools which have produced sustained employment among graduates would be given preferential consideration. Ms. Haygood responded that they were currently examining employment data to identify possible trends, but wanted to ensure that the data was credible and accurate.
- Representative Blackwell followed up by asking to what degree past trends should be considered, and posited that perhaps the criteria should employment growth in more recent years. Ms. Haygood answered that this was being considered and that the Community College System hoped to account for this concern during its analysis.
- Representative Blackwell continued by stating that he believed the Community College System needed to direct its efforts towards where North Carolina's future is likely to be and asked whether there was a need for a "hard" plan, as opposed to being more nimble. Ms. Haygood responded that the plan was always meant to be a "living" document.
- Representative Blackwell concluded by stating that the Community College System should work to identify ways of increasing information sharing between schools while preserving student privacy.
- Representative Strickland was recognized for a statement and shared the beneficial impact the local community colleges have had for his constituents. Additionally, Representative Strickland highlighted the value of a higher education other than a four-year university, and cautioned that the Community College System should not exclusively focus on university transfer programs.

Senator Barefoot thanked President Haygood for taking the time to present to the committee and answer the questions of the committee members.



There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 12:28pm.



Presiding



Seth Riggins, Committee Clerk