

MINUTES

JOINT LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

December 6, 2011

The Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee met on Tuesday, December 6, 2011, at 1:00 p.m. in room 643 of the Legislative Office Building. Representative Linda Johnson, House of Representatives Co-Chairwoman, presided. The following Senators were in attendance: Senator Jerry Tillman, Senate Co-Chairman; Senators Apodaca, Brock, Dannelly, Preston, Robinson, Rucho, Soucek, and Stevens. The following House members were also present: Representative Bryan Holloway, House Co-Chairman; Representatives Blackwell, Brandon, Goodman, Hilton, Langdon, Pridgen, Sanderson, and Stam. The following members of the Legislative Research Staff were in attendance: Drupti Chauhan, Patsy Pierce, Kara McCraw, and Sara Kamprath. Joanna Hogg, Legislative Assistant for Representative Linda Johnson, served as the Committee Clerk. Members of the sergeant-at-arms were present.

Chairwoman Johnson convened the meeting and welcomed everyone. She introduced the House and Senate sergeant-at-arms by their names and number of years they have been working at the General Assembly. Chairwoman Johnson asked the Co-Chairs if they had any remarks to add.

Chairwoman Johnson noted that during the meeting they would be discussing Research, Engagement and Capability Hub of North Carolina, the Race to the Top proposal, and the status of the current Race to the Top grant.

Research, Engagement and Capabilities Hub of North Carolina

Chairwoman Johnson recognized Dr. Courtney Thornton who is with Research, Engagement and Capabilities Hub of North Carolina (REACH NC) and The University of North Carolina systems - General Admissions.

Dr. Thornton explained that she is speaking on behalf of Steven Leath, Vice President for Research with the University of North Carolina systems (UNC systems). Dr. Thornton noted that she serves as the Director of Research for the UNC systems. Before Dr. Thornton discussed the agenda topic, she shared information about research across the UNC systems.

The UNC systems campuses received 1.4 billion dollars in new research awards in fiscal year 2010. About 200 million dollars of that money was from American Recovery and Reinvestment Act research funds or stimulus funding. The UNC systems is currently working on numbers for fiscal year 2011 to be able to confirm the indication that even without the sum of money from American Recovery and Reinvestment Act research funds they are still showing growth in terms of total research awards dollars. Commercial activities across the UNC systems campuses accumulatively hold about 4000 active patents. They have been involved in the start-up of over 200 companies based off university research. Ninety five percent of those companies have or had North Carolina operations.

Dr. Thornton explained the history of how REACH NC originated.

Dr. Thornton stated that in 2009-2010 the UNC systems spent a lot of time thinking about commercialization of research. They thought of how they could take their discoveries and push them out more quickly and more often to make an impact in society. The UNC systems also talked quite a bit with industry through that process. REACH NC was developed as a direct response to industry requests, in order to show industry what sets them above any other university systems. Dr. Thornton then addressed the purpose of the REACH NC.

Dr. Thornton stated that REACH NC is a web-based portal that allows people to search Universities and Research Institutions on the expertise of university personnel. Dr. Thornton explained there are four primary audiences that are benefitting from REACH NC: faculty members of the Universities, University administrators, North Carolina Business and Industry, and the general public.

Dr. Thornton added that REACH NC was very fortunate to receive some support from the Triangle University Center for Advanced Studies. That portion of the funding will support project and data management for REACH NC for the next three years.

Dr. Thornton introduced Dr. Sharlini Sankaran, who was named the Executive Director for REACH NC in November, 2011.

Dr. Thornton then showed the Committee the REACH NC Web Portal, www.reachnc.org. (See presentation material behind Tab 4 in Members' notebook) She explained that REACH NC is part one of a much bigger vision of what REACH NC will be. Right now on the REACH NC website, there are profiles from two campuses: North Carolina State University and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Those two universities were the two beta institutions in developing REACH NC. In January, REACH NC will be rolling out additional profiles that will expand the website to include 15 University of North Carolina institutions. Around 5000 experts are enrolled in the system right now. The enrolled experts are largely in life sciences, physical sciences, and engineering. REACH NC is working to expand to other profiles which include expertise in social sciences and humanities. Also, Duke University has committed to profile their experts in the system as well.

Dr. Thornton explained how to search the profiles on REACH NC. She added that the three ways to search for experts are by concepts, last name, and full type search.

Dr. Thornton demonstrated what types of information can be found on an expert's profile including publications, similar experts, grants the experts have acquired, people whom the experts have co-published with, and a diagram of the REACH NC internal collaborators. The publication data is coming from an outside vendor and the grant data is from internal sources. Dr. Thornton explained that the two key goals of the whole process are to make the information as comprehensive as possible and to automate the information as much as possible. It is a work in progress and there is tremendous potential to build off this type of foundation. The UNC campuses are thinking about other ways that once the information is available, they will augment it to further serve the state. They are also thinking of taking this data and using it in slightly different ways to help in terms of commercialization of their research.

Dr. Thornton answered questions from Committee members related to the REACH NC Web Portal.

Chairwoman Johnson thanked Dr. Thornton for her presentation.

Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge (Early Childhood) Grant Application

Chairwoman Johnson introduced Anne Bryan, Senior Policy Advisor on Early Childhood for the Office of the Governor.

Ms. Bryan addressed the Committee regarding the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge (Early Childhood) Grant Application. Ms. Bryan wanted to let members know that she is representing a team of people who are working on the project. She introduced Dr. Deb Cassidy, Director of the Division of Child Development and Early Education; John Pruitt, Office of Early Learning with the Department of Public Instruction; Dr. Kelly Maxwell, FPG Child Development Center at UNC Chapel Hill; Elizabeth Grovenstein, Office of the State Budget and Management; and Susan Perry Manning, NC Partnership for Children.

Ms. Bryan explained that the team is very excited about the potential and promise of the pending proposal and think it holds a tremendous opportunity for North Carolina. Ms. Bryan added that they have not yet found out if North Carolina will be receiving the Grant.

Ms. Bryan gave an overview of the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge (Early Childhood) Grant Application and North Carolina's response to that opportunity. (See presentation material behind Tab 5 in Members' notebook) The grant opportunity came to them as a joint initiative of two major federal agencies; the United States Department of Education and the Department of Health and Human Services. There is 500 million dollars in grant money available. Five to eight states are going to be selected to receive the grants. The guidelines for the program came to them in late August and it was a very quick turnaround.

The overall purpose of the Early Learning Challenge grant is to challenge states to build a coordinated system of early learning and development that ensures that many more children from low income families and disadvantaged children that range from birth to age five have access to dramatically improved early learning and development programs. Another main purpose of the challenge is to make sure children are able to start kindergarten with a strong foundation for future learning.

The Early Learning Challenge called for bold action to improve early learning and development, and environments. The intent is to fund applications that demonstrate a State's commitment to build a statewide system that raises the quality of early learning and development programs so that all children receive the support they need to enter kindergarten ready to succeed.

Through the past two decades, programs like Smart Start, More at Four, and NC Pre-K have provided developmental screening for young children. North Carolina is recognized across the

nation for the impact the programs have had on the young children. Ms. Bryan explained that it is a gold mine of developmental potential in a child's early years and if the children have positive experiences in those years it really sets them out on a strong path for achievement. If a child does not receive those positive experiences in their early years, they will be playing a game of catch up after that. Ms. Bryan added that they know they cannot do it all with the grant program, but surely can take some steps to make sure they are putting themselves in a better position in North Carolina for success.

Ms. Bryan explained the process used in developing North Carolina's grant application.

The Governor assigned the Early Childhood Advisory Council the responsibility of developing the application. The Council gathered input in a number of ways, held a meeting for stakeholders, received comments from people around the state, and received statements and letters of support from people around the state to be a part of the application process. On October 19 the Council submitted an application for \$69,999,121 of grant money. \$70,000,000 is the level at which North Carolina was eligible to apply.

The Council intends to build on the many achievements that North Carolina has had over the past decades. The focus they believe needs to be on outcomes. It is important to have timely data that is useful for planning so the Council will make it certain they are supported by a strongly integrated data system that works across programs that give information they need. In addition, there is a strong body for research that has developed over the past few years about what it takes to make programs successful when they are implemented. The implementation science will guide their work. They are going to use the steps and the processes in implementations sites to make sure North Carolina is getting the biggest bang for every buck.

As important as the early childhood development settings are for children, there is much more that goes into a successful foundation such as healthcare, social/emotional development, and behavioral health. All those pieces have to fit together in a comprehensive system of services. Not all of those can be funded through this grant program, but they are recognizing that they all have to come together to be successful. The Council wants to start with infant and toddler programs. Then providing access to a continuity of services throughout those early years to make sure the children are getting off to the best possible start. It is the foundational pieces that should be in place to use the grant successfully.

Ms. Bryan noted the status is that there are 37 applications under review in Washington DC, and North Carolina is one of them. The Council is expecting to hear back within the next two weeks if North Carolina's grant application has been accepted. For the states that are successful there will be a grant award made by December 31st. It is a four-year grant time frame so the funding of almost 70 million dollars will be used over a four-year period with the program.

Ms. Bryan continued to describe North Carolina's proposal.

The grant guidance that the Council received was very precise in what they were looking for. It was very prescriptive in the way the Council could respond in order to be successful. The Council focused on the proposal that was most responsive to the guidelines they received and

where North Carolina would get the most points in the review process. They were looking to where they could make investments that will show long term results that will continue after the four year grant period is over. In the guidelines, there were several priorities that the Government in Washington, DC is watching closely to see how they respond to the items.

The absolute priority they are most looking for is promoting school readiness for children with high needs. Ms. Bryan thought North Carolina had a strong case to make with what has been done in our State.

The Council's application focuses on North Carolina's three overarching strategies. All of the projects and activities fall within the three strategies. The strategies include strengthening standards and assessments, investing in people and relationships, and target high intensity supports and community infrastructure building efforts. She concluded that she does not have the time to explain all the projects they are working on but would be happy to answer any of the Members' questions.

The implementation plan is to continue efforts to bring everyone together to make a difference for young children. The Early Childhood Advisory Council would be the lead agency for the grant. There are three participating state agencies that have responsibilities for projects. Those agencies include the Division of Child Development and Early Education, and the Division of Public Health. Both divisions are within the Department of Health and Human Services. Also, the Office of Early Learning is included, which is within the Department of Public Instruction. There will be other non-profit agencies as well who will be responsible for various aspects of the program.

Chairwoman Johnson thanked Ms. Bryan for speaking.

Ms. Bryan, John Pruitt with the Department of Public Instruction, and Dr. Deb Cassidy with the Division on Child Development and Early Education answered questions asked by Members of the Committee.

Current Status of Race to the Top

Chairwoman Johnson stated the next presentation is by Dr. Atkinson and Adam Levinson, on the Race to the Top grant that North Carolina received about a year ago. (See presentation material behind Tab 6 in Members' notebook). Dr. Atkinson introduced herself and Adam Levinson who is the Race to the Top Program Director.

Dr. Atkinson began by telling Members' she has lived in her townhome for almost ten years. In living there for ten years she has realized that her laundry room isn't efficient. She also recognized that her garage is in need of some major overhauls to accommodate storage. She recognized that one of her bedrooms needs to be turned into an office because she has different needs there. She has been working in Education for well over ten years and has recognized for over ten years that education in our state needs remodeling just as her townhome. Dr. Atkinson told Members' they were going to talk about how Race to the Top is giving North Carolina the funds to remodel public education.

In Dr. Atkinson's overview, she explained what they are planning to remodel, the guiding principles they are using for that remodeling, and what will happen after the remodeling is finished. Dr. Atkinson added the reason remodeling is needed for education is because North Carolina needs to be competitive and for the students and economy to be strong. Race to the Top will contribute to the economy by making sure students in North Carolina are able to compete and elaborate with students across the world. Remodeling also needs to take place because all students, just not some, should be career and college ready, and to be productive citizens. North Carolina's graduation rate is at an all-time high. It must be ensured for the sake of North Carolina that not all students need to follow the same path to get to the same place. A part of the work in remodeling is to make sure students have different paths available to get them to the same place. The goal is to make sure there is a more effective and efficient system.

Dr. Atkinson said that just like her townhome needs some remodeling, in education, there needs to be a few walls expanded, a few walls knocked down, and rewiring to accommodate new technology. With any remodeling it is important to have some guiding principles. Race to the Top's guiding principles include personalized education for every child. Research says that there needs to be an effective teacher for every child. There needs to be an effective and efficient leader for every teacher. There should be high standards and good measures for all students. Not like in some of the other race to the top states, North Carolina's efforts are to reach every single public school and charter school in the state. Race to the Top plans to do that by making sure the same thing isn't built one hundred times, but to just build it one time and have it used by every school in the state.

Dr. Atkinson included that all of the work being done with Race to the Top can be found on their website. The plan for Race to the Top requires the Race to the Top team to use the funds in a way that would be sustainable after all the work is done. The funds must focus on building capacity and building an infrastructure that will last. For example like putting a roof on a house they want to make sure that the work they do will last for a long time and that they won't take any short cuts to where they would have to replace that roof in a short time period.

Dr. Atkinson stated that they want Race to the Top to be a sustainable reform. One good thing about Race to the Top is that it will allow North Carolina to move faster and further in education. There is alignment with Legislation that was passed, with career-college ready set go, and with the State Board of Education goals and measures. All of those pieces of alignment came together with the Race to the Top grant. In other words, the different initiatives come together as an architectural plan for the remodeling of education. Dr. Atkinson added that the Race to the Top work aligns with legislation that was passed about teacher effectiveness, school accountability, and to improve reading performance. The entire Race to the Top work is designed so that North Carolina can have a much higher graduation rate and better prepared students.

Dr. Atkinson drew the Members' attention to Adam Levinson who was there to present more details about the blueprint, the project management, and the budget for the Race to the Top remodeling effort.

Mr. Levinson thanked the Madam Chair, the Members', and Dr. Atkinson for allowing him to speak.

Mr. Levinson began by telling Members' that North Carolina was well positioned to win the Race to the Top grant because as Dr. Atkinson said, the state strategic plan lined up with what Race to the Top was looking for regards to the application. Mr. Levinson showed Members' the graphic that was used in the Race to the Top application to represent how they would apply the Race to the Top funding.

Mr. Levinson explained that every community in North Carolina needs to be ready for whatever comes next in their schooling. They believe there needs to be limitless opportunities to define the future of North Carolina. In order to have those opportunities, teachers have to be able to measure where their students are in achievement of their goals. It translates into the Common Core Standards. North Carolina has not only been a leader in promoting the adoption of the Common Core, but also redesigned the entire course of study. The Common Core includes Mathematics, English and Language Arts. North Carolina has revamped the Common Core and included Science and Social Studies. The subjects that are included in the Common Core are what students need to know how to do in North Carolina to come out ready for college or a career.

In terms of measures, North Carolina uses the ABC system. The ABC system is something that Mr. Levinson believes has been good for the state, and has moved the school system higher. The downfall is that the ABC system mostly only measures what has happened over the year and only gives information at the end of the year about where a student is. It is known that teachers need to be measuring not only at the end of the school year but all throughout the course so that they have information to use for mid-course corrections.

The Race to the Top team realizes that there is more that needs to be done to have an efficient teacher for each student. Mr. Levinson used the example that anyone that has worked for a boss may have noticed there are good and not so good bosses. Mr. Levinson added that if that if a boss is a strong leader it can make a huge difference in the fact workers can reach their task regardless of the amount of work they have to put in. The Race to the Top team is working on a system to help see what effective teaching is and to see which teachers are effective.

Race to the Top has goals in intervening in lower income schools because it is the State's reasonability. Race to the Top also has a strong evaluation component. Race to the Top has research initiatives from North Carolina State University, the University of North Carolina, and the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. The Universities all enjoy working together to make sure that Race to the Top is doing things that are effective.

Mr. Levinson told Members' that the original grant application can be found on the Race to the Top website. The website allows access to state and local work that is being done within Race to the Top. Also, the budget for the state and local initiatives can be found on the website.

The Race to the Top grant that was given to North Carolina was slightly under 400 million dollars, and has to be used over a four-year time frame. The funds were split 50% to flow for

local initiatives and 50% for State initiatives. Every one of those dollars has to be spent on a detailed scope of work. The United State Department of Education approved North Carolina's State scope of work, which can be accessed on the website. The local scope of work that is being done is almost identical to the State scope of work.

Mr. Levinson stated that Dr. Atkinson was going to explain the Race to the Top team that has been assembled.

The Race to the Top application required the signature of the Governor, the State Board of Education Chair and the State Superintendent. To insure that the education remodeling efforts are tracked and specifications are being met, the Governor's Education Transformation Committee was appointed. The committee consists of a group of 27 people who represent charter schools and traditional public schools; and associations and non-profits in business and industry. They are a part of the oversight and advisement in making sure the Race to the Top team is on target and on budget. Also, the remodeling effort involves collaboration in the entire Department of Public Instruction. Most of the employees in the entire department are directly supporting Race to the Top, even though they are not supported financially. The employees funded by Race to the Top are only temporary employees. Before applying for the position, they have to go to the State Department of Education and the Department of Public Instruction websites. On both websites, it says that the position is temporary. There are currently 75 temporary positions.

Dr. Atkinson turned the presentation over to Mr. Levinson to talk about the management of the temporary crews. The management includes The Department of Education leadership team, Superintendents, and Mr. Levinson. The group meets weekly. There is also a significant oversight that comes when there is a grant of around 400 million dollars. The federal government required that the Race to the Top team show that they are getting work done on time and on budget as seen on the slide and posted on the website.

Dr. Atkinson began to talk about what North Carolina should be like after the remodeling is finished. The Race to the Top grant ends in 2014. Teachers, students and parents have cost effective technology tools to help to meet the rigorous standards that are now in place through the Common Core. At the touch of buttons, teachers, parents, and students can access quality materials that will help teachers in the classroom and help students to learn at higher levels. There should be a graduation rate that is higher than 85%, which is a part of legislation, but they anticipate that it will even be higher than 85%. Students should be career and college ready and the remediation rate should be cut dramatically. In addition, when the remodeling is finished, North Carolina students should be above the average when it comes to reading and mathematics.

Dr. Atkinson and Mr. Levinson answered questions from Committee members related to the Race to the Top grant.

Chairwoman Johnson thanked them both for presenting.
Chairwoman Johnson adjourned the meeting.

Joanna Hogg, Committee Clerk

Representative Johnson, Chairwoman