

**MEETING SUMMARY**

**VISION 2025  
LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION ON THE  
FUTURE OF HIGHER EDUCATION**

**Friday, November 8, 2013  
10:00 A.M.  
Room 151, State Capitol  
Little Rock, Arkansas**

Senator Joyce Elliott, the Chair of the Vision 2025 Legislative Commission on the Future of Higher Education, called the Commission meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

**LEGISLATIVE MEMBERS OF THE VISION 2025 LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION ON THE FUTURE OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN ATTENDANCE:** Senator Joyce Elliott, Chair; and Senator Johnny Key.

**NON-LEGISLATIVE MEMBERS OF THE VISION 2025 LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION ON THE FUTURE OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN ATTENDANCE:** Mrs. Denise Garner, Vice Chair; Mr. Cory S. Anderson for Dr. Sherece West-Scantlebury; Mr. Forest Boles; Mr. Shane Broadway; Mr. Chad Brown; Ms. Jerri Derlikowski; Dr. Joe D. Giammo; Mr. Ray Henson for Dr. Robert Gunter; Dr. Fitz Hill; Dr. Tom Kimbrell; Mr. Nate Looney; Dr. Michael Moore for Dr. Donald Bobbitt; Mr. Rex Nelson; Ms. Sarah Roberson; Ms. Jamie Scott; Mr. Samuel Sicard; Mr. Bill Stovall replacing Dr. Edward Franklin; Mr. George West; and Ms. Kim Whitten.

Senator Elliott asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the September 18, 2013 meeting. The motion was seconded. *The minutes were approved without objection.*

Senator Elliott also requested that members in attendance stand in order of seating and introduce themselves, name those who appointed them, and comment on affiliations outside of their appointment to the Commission.

**Mr. Forest Boles**, Office of the Governor, gubernatorial appointment

**Dr. Michael Moore**, Vice President for Academic Affairs, University of Arkansas System, representing **Dr. Donald Bobbitt**, President, University of Arkansas System, gubernatorial appointment

**Ms. Sarah Roberson**, Executive Director, City Year Little Rock/North Little Rock

**Mr. Chad Brown**, Director of Research, Circumference Group, Little Rock, AR, gubernatorial appointment

**Ms. Jamie Scott**, Director, Upward Bound, Arkansas Baptist College, legislative appointment

**Ms. Jerri Derlikowski**, Director of Education Policy and Finance, Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families, statutory designation by position

**Mr. Cory S. Anderson**, Vice President, Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation, representing **Dr. Sherece West-Scantlebury**, President and CEO, Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation, statutory designation by position

**Mr. Samuel Sicard**, President & CEO, First National Bank of Fort Smith, Fort Smith, AR, gubernatorial appointment

**Mr. Nate Looney**, Attorney, Waddell, Cole and Jones, Jonesboro, AR, gubernatorial appointment

**Mr. George West**, President, Communication Workers of America, Local 6508, gubernatorial appointment

**Ms. Kim Whitten**, Director of Operations, Ozarka College, Ash Flat campus, legislative appointment

**Mr. Bill Stovall**, Executive Director, Arkansas Association of Two-Year Colleges (AATYC), statutory designation by position

**Dr. Tom Kimbrell**, Commissioner, Arkansas Department of Education, statutory designation by position

- Mr. Rex Nelson**, President, Arkansas' Independent Colleges and Universities  
**Mr. Ray Henson**, Associate Director, Career and Technical Education, Arkansas Department of Career Education, representing **Dr. Robert Gunter**, who is the statutory designee of Mr. William L. "Bill" Walker, Director, Arkansas Department of Career Education  
**Mrs. Denise Garner**, Community Member, Fayetteville, AR, gubernatorial appointment  
**Dr. Fitz Hill**, President, Arkansas Baptist College (*not present during introductions*)  
**Mr. Shane Broadway**, Director, Arkansas Department of Higher Education, statutory designation by position (*not present during introductions*)  
**Dr. Joe D. Giammo**, Political Science Department, University of Arkansas at Little Rock (UALR), legislative appointment (*not present during introductions*)

Representative Ann Clemmer, Ms. Cynthia Moten, Mr. Andrew Parker, and Mr. Grant Tennille were not present at the meeting.

Senator Elliott announced that Ms. Adrienne Williams would include a synopsis of each meeting in the Commission members' folders. She also advised members that all future commission meetings, unlike the first, will end by noon unless a specific issue warrants a longer meeting.

Senator Elliott said she initially wanted presentations from the agency heads of the 2-year and 4-year colleges and universities to describe the "Arkansas overlay" regarding the initiatives that are being put in place to fill in the gaps of education attainment before the Commission moves forward. However, those topics would be discussed at the next scheduled Commission meeting. She said that much information is known about students who can't go to college or those who can't afford to go, but not as much is known regarding what to do about it. Senator Elliott also stated there is the smaller group that can gain access to select colleges and/or universities and still get scholarships – if they choose to, but some just don't know how to apply. She expressed her appreciation for the organization, Arkansas Commitment, which helps students of diverse backgrounds navigate the college and financial aid applications process as well as help them develop other skills.

Senator Elliott introduced Mr. Jason Hamilton, Executive Director of Arkansas Commitment.

*Presenter & Synopsis:*

**Mr. Jason Hamilton**, Executive Director of Arkansas Commitment, was recognized. He began with the history of Arkansas Commitment. In 1999, Dr. Dean Kumpuris and other city leaders created the no-cost program with twenty-five (25), high-achieving African-American high school students in the state. It is modeled after a similar program in Memphis, TN. In 2008, Mr. Hamilton became the Executive Director, and he increased enrollment from twenty-five (25) to about fifty (50) students. He said that he also expanded the program to include students from diverse backgrounds. He also explained some of the objectives of Arkansas Commitment that include: helping students navigate through college enrollment, providing assistance to obtain financial aid (*i.e.* loans and scholarships), teaching students leadership skills, encouraging students to understand the concept of commitment to themselves, and addressing education access issues for underrepresented groups of students. In conclusion, Mr. Hamilton stated that the Arkansas Commitment program could be modeled throughout the state, if not the south, to help all students gain access to higher education.

*Issues Included in the Discussion:*

- Part of the problem for most students is lack of access;
- Since 2009 AR Commitment has served 27 (public, private, and charter) high schools in 6 counties;
- For most students in the program, approximately 50% qualify for Federal Pell Grant and 25% don't qualify;
- All students must take between 6-8 Advanced Placement (AP) classes;
- Arkansas Commitment also teaches students life skills, participates in social exploration, and requires students to get involved in monthly community service projects;

- Program curriculum:
  - *9<sup>th</sup> grade*: “foundation year” must include four years of English, math, science, and foreign language;
  - *10<sup>th</sup> grade*: focuses on grades and rigor; gets to know the students’ passion, develops leadership skills, and regional college tours (*i.e.* UCA and Hendrix Colleges in Conway);
  - *11<sup>th</sup> grade*: out-of-state college tours are conducted during the first three days of Spring Break, ACT prep courses, meetings with students and families to research colleges, and resumé building;
  - *12<sup>th</sup> grade*: applying to college, applying for scholarships or other financial aid, and internships.
- Ninth grade students meet for one hour once a month and 10-12<sup>th</sup> grade students meet one hour twice a month, and all students must submit grades anytime they are requested;
- Since 2010, approximately 146 students received \$3.7 million per year in scholarships and other aid, which totaled \$15 million for a four-year course of study.

Senator Elliott thanked Mr. Hamilton for his presentation.

PowerPoint Presentation:

Arkansas Commitment Leadership Development for Black Students

Handout:

Arkansas Commitment Acceptances of the Class of 2010-2013

Presenter & Synopsis:

**Mr. Chad Brown**, Director of Research, Circumference Group, was recognized. Mr. Brown is the President of the Harvard Club of Arkansas. As president, he goes to college fairs to recruit and interview students. The goal of the club is to show students the possibilities and encourage students’ interest in Harvard. Mr. Brown said he also tries to help students recognize that colleges like Harvard, Yale, Princeton, and other Ivy League schools aren’t just “places for geniuses”—those schools are for anyone who wants to work hard and help their community. He said it is also important to help students feel supported about their choice to attend a school outside of Arkansas but also show them there are opportunities available back here in Arkansas. Mr. Brown concluded by stressing the importance of encouraging students not to limit themselves, but to explore all of their options and possibilities.

Issues Included in the Discussion:

- Part of the problem for most students is lack of access and information about how to apply;
- Harvard averages sixty (60) applications from high achieving students in Arkansas, which is too low;
- High-achieving/low-income students don’t think they should apply to schools like Harvard;
- Harvard has a program that allows families making \$65,000 per year or less to attend all four years on a need-based grant and offers aid to families in other income brackets;
- Approximately 60% of Harvard students attend using need-based grants and 20% of students use scholarships.

Senator Elliott asked the Commission how to attract students back to Arkansas, because she said we need students to return. She also cited a study by Caroline Hoxby and Chris Avery that detailed how high-achieving/low-income students don’t know they can apply to elite colleges that offer need-based scholarships. She and Mr. Brown agreed the primary issues are that students don’t know and don’t think they can apply and be accepted.

Senator Elliott thanked Mr. Brown for his presentation.

Presenter & Synopsis:

**Ms. Jerri Derlikowski**, Director of Education Policy and Finance, Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families, was recognized. Ms. Derlikowski read the purpose of the Vision 2025 Commission and outlined the history of similar task forces and committees. In the '80s, the Quality Higher Education Study Committee (enacted from 1983 legislation), the Committee on Higher Education (1988), and the Carnegie Foundation commissioned by the Arkansas Business Council (1988) were assigned to study and present a report to legislators that recommended ways to reform the higher education system. In their report, the Arkansas Business Council suggested supporting a tax increase in exchange for accountability and reforms in higher education. In 2003, the Blue Ribbon Committee on Higher Education criticized the higher education system by stating that "Major structural reform is necessary. Incremental changes will not create meaningful improvement to the current situation." Ms. Derlikowski stated that those "incremental changes" have frustrated previous efforts to improve higher education, because the same methods are used each time yet different results are expected.

Ms. Derlikowski said the Legislative Taskforce on Higher Education Remediation, Retention, and Graduation Rates (2008) tried to understand the setting and current education data, attempted to define the problems/challenges, and tracked legislation regarding the state's higher education system. She stated utilizing those and other solutions would help the Commission to succeed, but there also needs to be more support from the community to maintain the momentum for changes to the higher education system. She suggested there should be reviews of the state's higher education and K-12 systems to see how they interact with each other and described the main road blocks of higher education — funding and implementation. In conclusion, she stated approaches to improve higher education challenges will require unique solutions from Commission members.

Issues Included in the Discussion:

- Discussed the barriers to improving education in Arkansas;
- Provided suggestions on how the commission could proceed based on previous task forces
- Outlined the challenges that may have impeded progress in the past;
- Suggested the Commission limit the scope of research to maintain focus on the issues at hand;
- Improve the functionality of higher education;
- Build support for higher education reform.

PowerPoint Presentation:

Presentation for the Vision 2025 Commission

Handout:

PowerPoint Presentation to Vision 2025 Commission

Senator Elliott thanked Ms. Derlikowski for her presentation.

Suggestions for the Commission:

- Suggested that members discuss the commission's initiatives with residents in their area;
- Ask to be on local meeting agendas to present the commission's purpose and scope;
- Put together a PowerPoint presentation to be used by members as they address their local communities;
- Think about what Commission members can do to further effort to improve higher education;
- Take a month to go around state to discuss state of higher education.

Next Scheduled Meeting

Friday, January 17, 2013 at 10:00 a.m. (*time changed to 1:30 p.m.*); the location would be determined at a later date.

Adjournment:

The meeting adjourned at 11:46 a.m.

*Approved 01/17/14*