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Task Force on Higher Education Remediation, Retention, and Graduation Rates Meeting Minutes January 17, 2008

Legislative members in attendance: Senator Dave Bisbee, Representative Bill Abernathy, and Representative Johnnie Roebuck.

Non-legislative members in attendance: Dr. Clarence "Chip" E. Ates, Dr. Jim Purcell, Dr. Ed Franklin, Dr. Karen Hodges, Mr. Daniel Marzoni II, Dr. Sally Roden, Ms. Robin Bryant, and Ms. Patricia Weak.

Rep. Roebuck-Chair, called the meeting to order. She reminded the Task Force members of their commitment to completing the final report of the Task Force findings and recommendations by April 15, 2008.

The Task Force adopted the minutes for December 20, 2007, with no objection.

Kathryn Hazelett, Governor's Office, Director of Policy, and Emily Jordan-Cox, Governor's Office, Deputy Director of Policy, were recognized to make a special presentation to Dr. Steve Floyd for serving as Interim Director at the Arkansas Department of Education.

Dr. Daniel Marzoni II, President, Arkansas Education Association

Dr. Marzoni stated he didn't want to duplicate previous research and presentations, so he focused his attention on 3 specific duties given to the task force in Arkansas Code, Subchapter 24, 10-3-2403, Act 570 of 2007:

- (4) Identify the underlying factors that contribute to the number of students who are not ready for collegiate level classes in certain disciplines at the time of high school graduation;
- (6) Brainstorm new approaches that may be effective in producing increased levels of college readiness;
- (9) Develop a set of written recommendations for the General Assembly that improve remediation, retention, and graduation rates at the state's colleges and universities;

There are many reasons why students are not achieving. Many students have no interest in preparing themselves for college. We have to let them know that it will require more than a high school diploma to have a lifestyle like their parents. Mr. Marzoni stated it's difficult to counsel 9th graders to take the more rigorous courses. They generally want to think about it between their sophomore and junior years. Usually, that's too late.

Mr. Marzoni stated that part of the solution is Smart Core and Pre-K. Students have to be motivated at an earlier grade level to prepare for college. World of Work counseling needs to begin at the junior high school level or earlier. Remediation after 8th grade testing must be made mandatory. Right now it's not considered mandatory, but just enough to get the students past the test. We can't settle for barely adequate.

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If Arkansas puts Smart Core in place and makes it mandatory, we must not give in to the complaints of parents and students in the short term. Fayetteville has a Task Force right now that is trying to roll back the requirements for graduation because of complaints from students and parents. That may not be the outcome, but they are thinking about it. The pressure is on to show that they are retaining and graduating more students.

Mr. Marzoni reiterated important points made by previous presenters:

- Dr. Floyd stated that there are not enough students in the pipeline. For this Task Force to reach our goal, we must reach out to middle and junior high school students.
- Dr. James stated the long-term solution to junior college and college-level remediation is to implement the Smart Core and make it mandatory.
- We need to develop, implement, and fund a junior high outreach program that does more toward changing student motivations and goals for degrees. (See Mr. David Ray's recommendations, Nov. 15, 2007, minutes)

The Smart Core needs to be aligned with the ACT test and must improve ACT scores. If a student has a 25 ACT or higher, that student should be able to attend any college in Arkansas.

Mr. Marzoni went on to explain other recommendations and referred to his handout.

Sen. Bisbee asked whose fault is it that 30% of honor students still have to be remediated. He stated it can't be the student's fault, but it's the system's fault.

Mr. Marzoni answered that he's not blaming students and agreed that it is the system's fault but the students bear some responsibility as well. The system should challenge students to do better. There are classes that are considered Pre AP classes that are not functioning at a Pre-AP level.

Sen. Bisbee stated he doesn't expect 100% of students to go to college. He would like to see 30% of Arkansas's population obtain a bachelor's degree. Arkansas needs 50% of students to go to college, and if 70% of those students graduate, the state can meet its goals.

Sen. Bisbee stated that most of Mr. Marzoni's presentation was directed at the bottom 50% of students and although he cares about that bottom 50%, the state can not afford to send those students to college.

Dr. Jim Purcell, Director, Arkansas Department of Higher Education

Dr. Purcell stated that his presentation would cover some of the success he had in Oklahoma and discuss whether some of those things will work in Arkansas. He explained the correlation between the state per capita income and the share of adult population with a bachelor's degree. No state with a low proportion of people with bachelor's degrees has a high per capita income and vice versa. From 2000 to 2004 Oklahoma increased the percent of adults age 25 and older with bachelor's degrees from 20.2 to 22.2 and moved from 46th to 42nd in the state rankings.

He stated that there are some things that Arkansas can do to bring some success. Dr. Purcell compared higher education initiatives in Arkansas and Oklahoma.

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- Increasing awareness, access & opportunity - He pointed out that in Oklahoma, if a student qualifies for concurrent enrollment, they can enroll in community college for free.
- Incentivizing institutional performance - Rewarding institutions for degree production and on-time graduation, as well as for achieving intermediate benchmarks. The funding amount was \$2 million split up among all of the campuses.

Dr. Purcell stated that Incentivizing was the biggest difference between Oklahoma and Arkansas. Approximately \$2 million was allocated for performance funding in Oklahoma. There were also improvement grants for those campuses that consistently were unable to reach the performance funding target. There were Programs of Excellence Grants to highlight positive programs to bring students to the campus.

An improvement grant was given to provide scholarships to adult students with 90 hours or more and who lived near the institution. The students were given extra support, and they were able to graduate in a short period of time. This was a quick return on investment.

Dr. Purcell explained the performance funding formula measures and weights and how they were applied to the colleges and universities in Oklahoma. The results were positive. The institutions are not competing against other colleges; they are competing against themselves.

Bachelor's and associate degrees increased 25%. Overall productivity of degrees increased 24.5%. During that same time enrollment increased only 10%.

William (Bill) Walker Jr., Director, Department of Workforce Education

Mr. Walker stated that remediation, retention, and graduation rates are also important to the Department of Workforce Education. The Department of Workforce Education tracked their Career and Technical Education students for 5 years, and that is what will be shared with the Task Force today.

John L. Davidson, Deputy Director, Arkansas Department of Workforce Education

Mr. Davidson's presentation was "Celebrating Career and Technical Educational Performance." He stated that 76% of all 7th-12th grade students in all school districts are enrolled in one or more Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses. Secondary 2006-2007 CTE students by ethnicity are: 70% white, 22% black, 6% Hispanic, 1% Asian and 1% American Indian. He stated that 50% of CTE students experience economic barriers, 15% are individuals with disabilities, 15% are nontraditional enrollees, 3% are limited English proficient, 3% had other educational barriers, and only 15% had no barriers. As far as further education, 65% of CTE students who complete the required sequence of courses go directly to college.

Mr. Davidson stated that the CTE completers reduced their remediation rate by 14% over the past 5 years. The remediation rate for all Arkansas freshmen in 2005 was 52%. The overall remediation rate for all CTE completers was 53%. Approximately 34% of CTE students continuing to college enrolled in a 2-year Arkansas public college and 66% enrolled in a 4-year Arkansas public college.

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Mr. Davidson presented information from Arkansas Kuder career interest results from high school students by ethnicity. This information was extensive and is included in Mr. Davidson's handout.

Rep. Roebuck invited Mr. Walker and Mr. Davidson to attend future meetings of the Task Force.

Rep. Roebuck directed the Task Force members to review the Task Force members list to make sure the contact information is correct. She noted that Dr. Purcell's contact information had been added.

She also asked the Task Force to review everything on the list of presentations in their packets. The information is on the website for members and the public as well.

Rep. Roebuck stated the Task Force should discuss what format will be used for the final report. After looking at various reports, it was decided that the format of the Kentucky report will be strongly considered. It is readable and easy to understand. It also puts things into perspective for the reader. She commented that the decision about the format will need to be made at the next meeting. The members of the Task Force should look over the Kentucky report and be prepared to discuss at the next meeting. The outline will be decided at that time.

The workgroups were decided and a list of workgroup members was handed out.

- 4-year workgroup - Sen. Baker, Dr. Purcell, Dr. Roden, Dr. Hodges, and Mr. Ray
- 2-year workgroup - Rep. Abernathy, Dr. Franklin, Ms. Bryant, Ms. Weak, and Dr. Ates
- K-12 workgroup - Sen. Bisbee, Dr. James, Mr. Marzoni, and Dr. Kimbrell.

Each group should choose a leader and notify Rep. Roebuck as soon as we adjourn. The first meeting date should be decided as soon as possible. At any time, the workgroups are free to meet with other workgroups, and it is acceptable to invite other people to attend the workgroup meetings.

Dr. Roebuck reiterated that the vision of the Task Force is to meet the SREB average on bachelor's degrees by 2013. She urged the workgroups to concentrate on one question: **What policies can the workgroup recommend that will change behaviors to meet the vision of the Task Force?**

Dr. Dianna Julian was recognized for sitting in to replace Dr. Ken James.

Meeting adjourned.