

LaSTEM Advisory Council Meeting

May 13, 2021

10:00 a.m.

The LaSTEM Advisory Council met on Thursday, May 13, 2021, at the NASA Michoud Assembly Facility in New Orleans, Louisiana with the option of attending by Virtual Zoom.

Committee Members/Representatives Present

Bianca Deliberto (Proxy – Jean May Brett)
Calvin Mackie (Proxy – Lawrence Jackson)
Clint Coleman
Crystal Gordon
Frank Neubrandner
Jawanda Givens
Kenya Messer
Commissioner Kim Hunter Reed
Nathan Corley
Nathan Dolenc
Patty Glaser (Proxy – Kassie Cusachs)
Ronnie Morris
Scott Stevens
Susana Schowen Fuller
Tina Watts
Trisha Fos (Proxy – Christen Timmins)

Committee Members Not Present

Jaimee Williams
Janet Pope
Jim Henderson
Kellie Taylor-White
Kristen Reeves
Larry Carter, Jr.
Mahyar Amouzegar
Melissa Mann
Michael Gaudet
Representative Polly Thomas
Rachel Vincent-Finley
Senator Sharon Hewitt
Tom Yura
William Wainwright

Staff Members Present

Adronisha Frazier
Donald Boeckman
Harold Boutte
James Kuhns
Jennifer Stevens
Karthik Poobalabramanian
Randall Brumfield
Tony Wilson

Guests

Beonica Frazier
Breigh Rhodes
Catherine Cox-Boniol
Curtis Penrod
Darlene Williams
David Lafargue
Dianne Clark
Emma Hildreth
Evelyn Poitevent
Jamie Mixon
Jan Brenan
Jessica Deville
John Underwood
Kim Fossey
Mark Arseneault
Peter Sheppard
Shannon Lafargue
Sheila Boyington
Wendy Conarro

Welcome, Roll Call, and Updates

Commissioner Kim Hunter Reed called the meeting to order at 10 a.m., welcomed all attendees and thanked NASA Michoud Assembly Facility's Director, Robert Champion, for welcoming and hosting the Board of Regents at their facility.

Next, Dr. Brumfield acknowledged that public comments will be welcomed, reviewed public commenting procedure, did roll call, and determined that we had a quorum. Dr. Brumfield then moved into approval of the meeting minutes from the February 10, 2021 meeting.

There was a motion from Susie Schowen to approve the minutes and a second by Nathan Corley. With there being no opposition, the minutes were approved as submitted.

LaSTEM Advisory Council Meeting

May 13, 2021

10:00 a.m.

Dr. Brumfield introduced new member, Jawanda Givens, Director of the Workforce Investment Council, where she directs the activities of the council, occupational forecast conference, and the industry-based certification council. She also serves as a member and/or designee for several different boards and commissions, including the Workforce Development Board for River Parishes and LAT Houma.

Council Discussion

Commissioner Reed transitioned to the next agenda topic, noting the representation of all nine regional STEM Centers in the room. Each region was given 5 minutes to discuss high points as the first opportunity to showcase “a vision come to reality” with questions following.

Region 1 (Greater New Orleans Development Foundation/GNO, Inc.) was presented by Evie Sanders, Human Capital Manager, from GNO Inc. The STEM Center Director Daphne Barnes and Program Manager Josh Tatum will work together as points of contact. They identified four priority projects to include: (1) regional career exposure, (2) identifying gaps within the STEM ecosystem, (3) business and industry connections, and (4) regional STEM brand and cataloging of resources/partners/programs in the region. Commissioner Reed noted that GNO, Inc. was leading the efforts for Region 1. It is important to note there are models with higher education leading, K-12 leading, and business and industry leading across the nine regions. This provides an opportunity to see how these models work and how they can be improved.

Region 2 (Capital Area STEM) was presented by Kim Fossey, Interim Director. She highlighted the importance of access, which can be a barrier for many individuals. This region has two priority projects to include: (1) systemic PK-12 STEM integration and (2) access to resources. She stated there are numerous isolated events of STEM, but they are not connected. They have begun a pilot with two school districts in their region, are focusing some of their professional development on developing solid STEM experiences during the school day, and are working to involve the community through different partnerships.

Region 3 (Bayou STEM) was presented by Jan Brennan, Regional Director of Bayou STEM, and Dr. Clint Coleman, Dean of STEM at Fletcher Technical Community College. This region focused on two ongoing projects. Last year, they hosted an Astro Camp and Shell Energy Camp with over 600 students in attendance. They produced a 25-page report on findings from the camps. Dr. Coleman discussed an environmental series on coastal restoration for which a pilot project will focus on building an environmental curriculum specific to Louisiana for middle school students.

Region 4 (UL Lafayette) was presented virtually by Dr. Peter Sheppard, Interim Director. He noted they have partners across multiple sectors including industry, philanthropy, and community, and that they have a robust outreach agenda for summer 2021. The region will host several summer camps including: Advancing Mathematics and Science Excellence Camp which has been ongoing for 7+ years and will have a CSI mystery theme with 100 middle school students in attendance; a college readiness camp (partnering with Lafayette Parish Gear-Up Schools) for 50 incoming freshmen; a NASA Astro Camp with 450 K-8 students expected in attendance; and a collaboration between Region 4 and Region 3 for the Shell Venture Camp to include 100 students in attendance. The region will host a professional development opportunity for 60 high school teachers where they will look at the intersection of science and math with an integration of diversity. They will also provide \$20K in stipends for STEM majors through an NSF funded grant.

Region 5 (Calcasieu Parish School Board in partnership with McNeese University) was presented by Mark Arseneault, STEM Center Director. This regional center is the only location with direct access to the K-12 environment and located at a high school. Of the 70 school sites in Lake Charles, approximately 68 were impacted by the weather events of 2020 and 2021. Documentation has been submitted to LDOE to identify gaps in the area.

LaSTEM Advisory Council Meeting

May 13, 2021

10:00 a.m.

The highlighted STEM summer camps for 2021 include NASA Astro camp (1,000 students expected to attend), Minecraft, Coding, Master of Disaster (CPOEP), Student Spaceflight Experiments Program, eSports competitions, and will be a hub for regional robotics. They will also have a Voyage Solar System Exhibit which is a scale-sized model of the solar system, approximately 2,000 feet long, and will run from Fifth Street to Tenth Street.

Region 6 (Northwestern State University STEM Center) was introduced by Dr. Curtis Penrod and presented virtually by Dr. Darlene Williams, Vice President of Technology Innovation and Economic Development. Region 6 recently hired Jennifer DePriest as the center director. The STEM Center is located at the NSU CENLA Instructional Site at England Airpark. They have two priority projects which include establishing the Region 6 STEM Center/hiring a director and establishing a council in preparation of STEM activities for the summer, to include camps for students and professional development for teachers.

Region 7 (NWLA LaSTEM Innovation Center at SciPort Discovery Center) was presented by the director, Beonica Rutherford-Frazier. Region 7 is focusing on creating a comprehensive communication tool for knowledge and awareness of STEM activities for the region and to increase diversity, equity, and inclusion within STEM in the area. Some of their upcoming activities include: the Chandra X-Ray Observatory exhibit (which will be received on May 18 and previously located at the Smithsonian in Washington D.C.), Gameport (a \$35,000 grant approved by the Caddo Commission, which will build on the eSports competitions being held in middle schools and high schools), an upgrade to the IMAX Dome (\$2 million grant provided by the Mayor Perkins of Shreveport), “STEM-posiums,” making upgrades to the observatory (partnership with Verizon/Artemis Engineering Program by NASA), and presenting interactive talking experiences with historic Black American scientists and inventors through a partnership with The Mahogany Ensemble Theater.

Region 8 (Louisiana Tech University STEM Center) was presented by the Interim Director, Cathi Cox-Boniol. Their goal is to create a thriving partnership along the I-20 corridor in lieu of having a brick-and-mortar office building. They have identified satellite partners called the STEM Collective for Innovative Louisiana Stakeholders (SCILS) to include Centenary College, Bossier Parish Community College (BPCC), Grambling State University, ULM, Delta Community College, and Louisiana Center for Afterschool Learning (Virtual). There are also two PK-12 system, Caddo and Morehouse Parishes. They are also working with workforce development and chambers of commerce.

Region 9 (Southeastern Louisiana University STEM Center) was presented by the director, Dr. Wendy Conarro. Some of their current and upcoming activities include expanding their mobile STEM labs (a.k.a. “Brain Food Trucks”), a STEM lending library (a.k.a. “STEM Take Out”), NASA Astro Camps, launching three eSports arenas in the east, west, and center of the region, launch of the Louisiana Scholastic Esports Federation (LASEF), Robotify Mars Challenge, host their 3rd Annual Back-2-School STEM Fest. In addition, Dr. Conarro will work with the advisory committee to develop a strategic plan. Last, she introduced Miss Jessica Myers, who serves as an AmeriCorps Vista in a communications role for the region.

Commissioner Reed thanked the Regions and proceeded to welcome comments and questions. She noted and reiterated some of the key points, such as rural outreach, teachers and training, church outreach, diversity in STEM, women in STEM, and regional collaborations. She also thanked Senator Hewitt for her commitment to STEM initiatives and advocating for \$1 million recurring allocation for the Regents’ budget to fund the STEM Centers and Directors. Commissioner Reed added a “shout-out because she’s been [a] phenomenal, steadfast, fierce STEM champion for our state.” Commissioner Reed opened the floor for discussion.

Mr. Nathan Corley posed a question and comment to the Council to think about “What is STEM? What is STEM learning? What does it really mean? What will we endorse as quality STEM?” Dr. Lafargue added that STEM is defined in the legislation and as each region’s work moves forward, they should continue to come together for the

LaSTEM Advisory Council Meeting

May 13, 2021

10:00 a.m.

Council to review the work that is taking place. Ms. Schowen mentioned many centers focused on K-12, students and awareness, and teachers and professional development. The STEM Council has identified a need for a broader range to include adults and higher education. She encouraged others to think about ways to involve the whole family and look at adults and their participation.

Mr. Ronnie Morris asked for an explanation on eSports. Dr. Conarro briefly introduced eSports. The Louisiana Scholastic eSports Federation is led by the SELU Computer Science Department. eSports is a holistic approach through learning about strategies like robotics, competitiveness, teamwork, and having business models. It includes popular games that can be taught inside and outside the classroom. Mr. Mark Arsenault added that eSports is virtual gaming that allows students to compete against one another. There is an amount of critical thinking, strategy, and collaboration as important points of this competition. Commissioner Reed emphasized students are winning scholarships from virtual competitions. Ms. Rutherford-Frazier added a comment on its inclusivity. She mentioned how it works particularly well for students that cannot move due to a disability.

Ms. Jean May Brett provided a comment that LaSTEM has been covered in the LATM newsletter. She offered program visibility in the LSTA and LATM newsletters. She noted LSTA delivers six newsletters and LATM delivers four newsletters per year. Dr. Jackson added, “Don’t forget to extend outward from our central locations to get into the communities.”

Next, Dr. Brumfield read the public comments, two which were received from Mr. Frank Kidd. “In response to access as related to the presentation by Mrs. Kim Fossey, the TOPS Core Curriculum has not been updated since 2017. Mr. Kidd wants to update the CORE by adding computer science and cybersecurity to the science category 4 units. His second comment was in reference to the need for recruiting retired STEM professionals as teachers in the middle and high school level.” Commissioner Reed thanked Mr. Kidd for his comments on updating the TOPS Core and expanding our footprint with retired STEM educators. Dr. Reed mentioned a summer STEM social media campaign event could be pushed out from the regions and that a hashtag will be created for the summer STEM projects.

Next, Commissioner Reed transitioned to the Learning Blade Presentation where she introduced Mrs. Sheila C. Boyington, the CEO of The Learning Blade. Learning Blade is a toolbox of online lessons, projects, and activities designed to engage students while introducing them to careers, tools, and technology found in the STEM fields. The presentation highlighted the demand for STEM careers with low levels of participation (mainly due to lack of career awareness) and provided insight on remote and distance learning for STEM/CTE and computer science. In January 2020, they created the Learning Blade Backpack app to bridge the digital divide. This app allowed students to download interactive lessons to their Chromebook for offline access, allowing students to participate at home in rural environments with limited internet accessibility as well as urban communities. The student’s scores would automatically upload once connected to internet at school or Wi-Fi accessible location. The objective is to address inequities experienced by students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Learning Blade includes content across STEM subjects, lessons are aligned to state academic standards for grades 5 – 9 and has no cost for schools to register. To pre-register for an account, visit www.LearningBlade.com/LA. For additional information, email info@learningblade.com.

Dr. Lafargue asked whether any school could pre-register and utilize the platform? Mrs. Boyington referred to the pre-registration link. Mr. Morris asked what are the qualifications teachers need to use the resources? Mrs. Boyington stated anyone can use the resources in the system; and training is available in the user-friendly system. Another question was posed about the cost for professional development training, for which there is no cost. Another question raised was if the information is presented as a class at the middle school level or a component of another class? Mrs. Boyington stated it is supplemental. Someone asked, “What is the average length of time for a student to matriculate through a particular section of this program? Mrs. Boyington stated the online missions are designed to

LaSTEM Advisory Council Meeting

May 13, 2021

10:00 a.m.

be completed in 8 hours. They offer an express mission, which is about one to two hours in length. An inquiry was raised about additional opportunities for organizations, such as girls' and boys' scouts, for students to participate? Mr. Corley asked if the contract could extend to informal settings and afterschool providers around the state? This will be addressed further.

Commissioner Reed turned over the floor to Dr. Brumfield to address housekeeping items. The last item mentioned was from Jean May-Brett regarding the availability of state legislative funds for a program titled "The Quality Science and Math Grants Program." In the past, K-12 teachers had an opportunity to submit grant proposals for this program. This year, PreK-3 teachers will have the opportunity to submit grant proposals up to \$1,000 and teachers of grades 4- 12, up to \$1,500. The application will be available this summer.

Other Business

Commissioner Reed noted the next quarterly meetings for 2021, stating that the locations are tentative, and more information will be provided at a later date. Quarterly meeting dates are as follow:

Wednesday, August 18, 2021 – 10am – 12pm

Wednesday, November 10, 2021 – 10am – 12pm

With there being no other comments or business, a motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Morris and a second by Ms. Schowen. With all in agreement, the meeting was adjourned at 11:55 a.m.