



**Second Quarter LaSTEM Advisory Council Meeting**  
**April 20, 2023**  
**9:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.**

The LaSTEM Advisory Council met on Thursday, April 20, 2023, at the Claiborne Building in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

**Committee Members/Representatives Present**

Kaneisha Akinpelumi  
Bianca Deliberto  
Crystal Gordon (arrived after roll call)  
Sen. Sharon Hewitt  
Commissioner Kim Hunter Reed (Proxy – Carrie Robison)  
Lindsey Keith-Vincent  
David Lafargue (arrived after roll call)  
Francesca Mellieon-Williams  
Ronnie Morris  
Frank Neubrander  
Janet Pope (Proxy – Robin Cosenza)  
Breigh Rhodes  
Scott Stevens (arrived after roll call)  
Christen Timmins  
Rachel Vincent-Finley

**Committee Members Not Present**

Brian Davis  
Larry Carter, Jr.  
Jawanda Givens  
Patty Glasser  
Paul Helton  
Jim Henderson  
Calvin Mackie  
Melissa Mann

Rep. Vincent St. Blanc  
Kellie Taylor-White  
William Wainwright  
Tina Watts  
Jaimee Williams  
Tom Yura

**Staff Members Present**

Christina Cheek  
Clint Coleman  
Christine Norton  
Jennifer Stevens

**Guests & STEM Center Directors**

Barbara Carey, Otey White & Associates  
Diana Fultz, REC Foundation  
Jamie Mixon, LDOE  
Mark Arseneault, STEM Center Director  
Daphine Barnes, STEM Center Director  
Wendy Conarro, STEM Center Director  
Angela Boxie, STEM Center Director  
Summer Dann, STEM Center Director  
Jennifer DePriest, STEM Center Director  
Heather Kleiner, STEM Center Director  
Christie Landry, STEM Center Director

**Welcome and Roll Call**

Deputy Commissioner Carrie Robison, Board of Regents, welcomed the attendees and noted that she was attending as a proxy for Commissioner Kim Hunter Reed. She called the meeting to order at 9:06 a.m. Dr. Coleman called roll, noting quorum was not obtained.

**Approval of the First Quarter Meeting Minutes**

Ms. Robison stated that additional Council members were on their way, so approval of the First Quarter Meeting Minutes would be delayed until quorum was obtained. After a quorum was established, the motion was brought for consideration.

***On motion of Mr. Ronnie Morris, seconded by Mr. Scott Stevens, the Council approved the first quarter meeting minutes as submitted.***

### **Competitive Process Overview and Regional STEM Center Recommendations**

Ms. Robison asked Dr. Coleman to provide an overview of the competitive process and recommendations for the next three-year cycle for the Regional STEM Centers (RSCs). Dr. Coleman discussed the RFA timeline, stated that no new applications were submitted, and noted all applications were scored using two outside consultants. Feedback was provided by one of the reviewers, Ms. Heather Sherman with STEMx, to the applicants at the Directors' Retreat, which took place the day before. Dr. Coleman provided a brief overview of STEMx and its connection to LaSTEM as well as Ms. Sherman's findings from her review. The topics discussed were STEM literacy, increasing diversity, equity, and inclusion in STEM, and preparing the STEM workforce of the future. The key takeaways included the success of all nine RSCs in their first three-year cycle and national attention generated for the LaSTEM model, and Ms. Sherman added that all RSCs were recommended for continuation.

Dr. Lafargue commented that Regents may want to consider in the future a five-year, ongoing renewal as the three-year cycle could be stressful for the centers. Ms. Robison mentioned that staff have discussed internally a longer renewal period after this cycle but no final decision has been made. Dr. Lindsey Keith-Vincent abstained from the vote to approve the Regional STEM Centers.

***On motion of Senator Sharon Hewitt, seconded by Mr. Ronnie Morris, the Council approved the nine Regional STEM Centers for renewal.***

### **Outcomes and Recommendations from Focus Groups**

Ms. Robison reminded the Council that Otey White & Associates had joined discussions with the Council during the first-quarter meeting around public relations and building the profile of LaSTEM. She welcomed Ms. Barbara Carey to present outcomes and recommendations from the focus groups, including the Council and nine regional centers. She highlighted as features of these discussions reasons STEM is important to the future of Louisiana and the need for supporting messaging and a higher profile for LaSTEM initiatives.

Dr. David Lafargue suggested that increased access to data sets and relevant market projections will be essential to both promoting the work of LaSTEM and understanding future directions. Ms. Robison agreed that data are critical, but noted many legal issues with data sharing and a concern about data fatigue within the education sector. Dr. Coleman noted that Centers are already curating their own data. Senator Hewitt stated that workforce data have been provided to the Council in the past and that she would like to join any discussions around barriers to sharing data, to find legislative measures to fix them. Dr. Wendy Conarro, Center Director, suggested providing the public with a dashboard showing workforce needs and how these tie to the work of the Centers.

Finally, Ms. Carey presented a LaSTEM vision statement, developed the previous day in collaboration with center directors and LaSTEM, for Council consideration.

### **Discussion of STEM Definition Development**

Dr. Coleman introduced the topic of developing a formal, shared definition of STEM, explaining that many states have done this because STEM has over time developed numerous meanings. He provided a timeline of how the term "STEM" evolved and examples of STEM definitions adopted by other states. He invited thoughts and suggestions from the Council, indicating that the LaSTEM staff would develop a draft definition for consideration at the third quarterly meeting in August. Dr. Lafargue expressed support for the California and Texas STEM definitions, noting that LaSTEM spans all ages not just K-12.

Mr. Morris drew a connection from the definition to branding, asking whether a STEM mascot or icon had been developed that people could identify across the state. Several Council members expressed support for this idea, and noted that a mascot/icon had not yet been adopted. Ms. Heather Kleiner, Center Director, addressed the question about a mascot and provided the example of Maker Faire Global, an organization with uniform branding and a mascot that her Center, Sci-Port Discovery Center, has licensed. Council members discussed the possibility of a mascot and some ideas to link it to Louisiana's unique culture. Dr. Lafargue requested that branding ideas and examples be provided at a future meeting,

Mr. Morris then asked whether there were plans to incorporate the recent boom in artificial intelligence (AI) into LaSTEM, and the implications of AI for the state. Dr. Coleman noted that there is already an AI focus in LaSTEM, with an AI summer camp this year as well as introduction of Chat GPT and other applications into classrooms. Mr. Mark Arseneault, Center Director, explained Chat GPT and the different types of AI, adding that teachers have reached out to him to ask how to utilize this software in their classrooms. Ms. Conarro mentioned her Center has partnered with Amazon Web Services DeepRacer and conducted a variety of other IT-related outreach activities. Dr. Lafargue encouraged the Center directors to place a high priority on AI because of the speed with which the technology is growing and being adopted.

### **Summit Update**

Dr. Coleman reminded the Council that the 2023 LaSTEM Summit will be held on October 17<sup>th</sup> at the CAJUNDOME and Convention Center in Lafayette. The theme has been modified to STEM Today, Success Tomorrow. He informed the Council that all presentation slots were filled, adding that registration for exhibitors and sponsors was still open and general registration would open later in the spring. The Keynote will be Mark Perna, author of, *Answering Why: Unleashing Passion, Purpose, and Performance in Younger Generations*.

### **VEX (REC Foundation)**

Dr. Coleman introduced Ms. Diana Fultz, Director of Regional Operations for the REC Foundation, which partners with VEX Robotics around the globe. Ms. Fultz provided information about the mission and vision of the REC Foundation and spoke about opportunities to support robotics through statewide competitions.

The Council had many questions and comments focused on the logistics of the competitions and how regional centers could get involved and serve as hosts. Ms. Robison suggested engaging the directors in a separate roundtable conversation to discuss how this partnership could work on statewide and regional bases.

### **Louisiana Department of Education**

Dr. Coleman introduced Ms. Jamie Mixon, STEM Specialist at LDOE. Ms. Mixon provided a history of Louisiana's STEM initiative, an update on LDOE's key STEM efforts, current collaboration structures, and future opportunities.

Questions and comments following the presentation included the value of diploma seals within the STEM Pathways, scholarships and funding associated with them, and the need for more communication within regions related to student recruitment.

### **Other Business & Adjournment**

Ms. Christen Timmins noted the focus on much of LaSTEM's work on K-12 teachers and the tremendous stress teachers are experiencing at this time. She stated that many good content-area teachers are leaving the field. She asked that Council members and others do what they can to support public education in the state and, in particular, the educators. Dr. Lafargue asked Ms. Timmins to describe the stressors. She noted as major stressors curriculum demands related to high-stakes testing and a lack of funding/time/autonomy to integrate the kinds of enrichment activities discussed in the meeting. She suggested a need to de-emphasize standardized testing and revisit curricula (e.g., truly building engineering concepts into the math curriculum). Dr. Frank Neubrandt emphasized the importance of market-level salaries. Ms. Robison noted that Regents staffs the Teacher Recruitment, Retention and Recovery Taskforce and suggested those who have a global interest in the issue read the annual report provided to the legislature.

***There being no other comments or business, a motion to adjourn was made by Mr. David Lafargue and seconded by Ms. Crystal Gordon. With all in agreement, the meeting was adjourned at 10:44 a.m.***