

**LOUISIANA SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING, AND MATHEMATICS  
(LASTEM) ADVISORY COUNCIL**

**ANNUAL REPORT TO THE LOUISIANA SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE AND  
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION**



**LOUISIANA BOARD OF REGENTS**

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## List of Acronyms

<b>BOR</b>	Louisiana Board of Regents
<b>CDS</b>	Congressionally Driven Spending Request
<b>CEA</b>	Cooperative Endeavor Agreement
<b>EiE</b>	Engineering is Elementary Curriculum Support
<b>GNOrocs</b>	Greater New Orleans Region One Center for Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
<b>HBCU</b>	Historically Black College and Universities
<b>LASTEM</b>	Louisiana Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics Advisory Council
<b>LDOE</b>	Louisiana Department of Education
<b>NMSI</b>	National Math and Science Initiative
<b>OWA/TCI</b>	Otey White and Associates/The Communications Institute
<b>PD</b>	Professional Development
<b>R4NTC</b>	Region 4 Novice Teacher Collaborative
<b>RECIPE</b>	Relevant, Educational, Career Minded, Impactful, Purposeful, and Engaging
<b>RFA</b>	Request for Applications
<b>RSCs</b>	Regional STEM Centers
<b>SAS</b>	STEM After-School Programming
<b>STEM</b>	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
<b>VISTA</b>	Visual Integration of Science Through Art
<b>WISE</b>	Women in the STEM Economy

## Executive Summary

Act 392 of the 2017 Regular Session, authored by Senator Sharon Hewitt, commissioned the Louisiana Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics Advisory Council (LASTEM). Under the auspices of the Louisiana Board of Regents, the LASTEM Council is tasked to do the following:

- Coordinate and oversee the creation, delivery, and promotion of STEM education programs;
- Increase student interest and achievement in the fields of STEM;
- Ensure the alignment of education, economic development, industry, and workforce needs; and
- Increase the number of women who graduate from a postsecondary institution with a STEM degree or credential.

The Council, chaired by the Commissioner of Higher Education, is comprised of 29 members including representatives of both K-12 and postsecondary education, state agencies, business and industry, professional organizations with links to STEM education, training, and workforce, and economic development entities.

As required by Act 392, this report provides an update on the work of the Council, emerging initiatives, and recommendations for legislation and policy changes. The LASTEM Council was required by law to meet every month for the first year, beginning in September 2017, and did so until October 2018. The Council began quarterly meetings beginning in February 2019. In the fall of 2019, the Council selected nine Regional STEM Centers (RSCs) and allocated funds to the selected RSCs for operations. The initial three-year cycle for the RSCs concluded with the 2022-23 Cooperative Endeavor Agreements (CEAs). After a statewide application process earlier this year, all nine Regional STEM Centers were selected by the Council to continue operations for an additional three years (2023-2026).

## I. LASTEM Advisory Council Charge and Goals

This report, filed pursuant to Act 392 of the 2017 Regular Session of the Louisiana Legislature, highlights the significant progress made by the LASTEM Advisory Council in 2023. The law provides a list of tasks for the LASTEM Advisory Council, including:

- Create a comprehensive, statewide STEM plan that has clear objectives to guide the development of STEM education and STEM career opportunities and aligns elementary, secondary, and postsecondary STEM curricula, programs, initiatives and activities;
- Coordinate all state STEM education-related programs and activities;
- Create a new STEM culture and promote activities that raise awareness of STEM education and STEM career opportunities;
- Integrate employers and educators by engaging business and industry, employers, professional and community-based organizations, STEM education stakeholders, and career and talent programs and activities;
- Encourage industry and business entities to provide funding, resources, and technical assistance to elementary, secondary, and postsecondary schools to promote interest in STEM discipline courses and career opportunities;
- Connect STEM education resources, initiatives, and programs regionally and throughout the state;
- Establish an information clearinghouse, to be housed at the BoR, to identify and provide best practice resources for both the secondary and postsecondary educational systems and to review and acquire STEM education-related instructional materials;
- Empower STEM teachers and provide support for high-quality professional development for teachers of STEM subjects;
- As appropriate, join and participate in a national STEM network and collaborate with other states in STEM education program development; and
- Establish a competitive grants program to fund robotics competitions to provide students at all appropriate grade levels opportunities to improve STEM skills by participating in events sponsored by science and technology development programs.

The LASTEM Council and its subcommittees developed this broad-based charge from Act 392 into three goals that guide the work of the Council and support of the Regional STEM Centers (RSCs). The LASTEM goals are:

- **LASTEM Goal 1:** Build strong foundations for STEM literacy by ensuring that every American can master basic STEM concepts and become digitally literate.
- **LASTEM Goal 2:** Increase diversity, equity, and inclusion in STEM and provide all Louisianans with lifelong access to high-quality STEM education, especially those historically underserved and underrepresented in STEM fields and employment.
- **LASTEM Goal 3:** Prepare the STEM workforce for the future—both college-educated STEM practitioners and those working in skilled trades that do not require a four-year degree—by creating authentic learning experiences that encourage and prepare learners to pursue STEM careers.

The Council set purposeful and ambitious goals around the establishment of Louisiana RSCs and selection of their directors, and the 2023 calendar year saw the successful continued implementation of these objectives. The following section will focus on the successes achieved by the LASTEM Council over the past year.

## **II: A Successful Year of Engagement in STEM Education in Louisiana**

### **Advisory Council Meetings**

At its quarterly meetings, the LASTEM Council showcased the ongoing efforts and outcomes of the RSCs, emphasizing their tailored approaches to STEM education-workforce connections, as well as the broader impact of their statewide initiatives. The Council also welcomed STEM organizations and champions who shared noteworthy collaborations with the RSCs, highlighting opportunities for statewide growth and development. The meetings further provided opportunities for members to learn more about STEM-focused industrial facilities across the state and firsthand experiences of Louisiana's impressive STEM-centric workforce and career opportunities. The following presentations and discussions took place during quarterly meetings:

- **January 31, 2023 (Louisiana Art and Science Museum, Baton Rouge):**
  - Hosted by the Region 8 RSC in support of its VISTA (Visual Integration of Science Through Art) Center at LA Tech University. The VISTA Center offers two interdisciplinary minors (Pre-Medical Illustration and Scientific Illustration), bringing together faculty from art, biology, and biomedical engineering to offer students a unique opportunity to communicate science through art. The meeting served as a kickoff of the public VISTA exhibit at the Louisiana Art and Science Museum.
  - Introduction of Otey White and Associates/The Communications Institute (OWA/TCI) to the Council. OWA/TCI were hired to provide marketing and support materials for the LASTEM Summit and RSCs.
  
- **April 20, 2023 (Claiborne Building, Baton Rouge):**
  - Review of the competitive process for RSC selection and recommendations that all nine current RSCs continue for another three-year cycle.
  - OWA/TCI presented their findings to the Council from the Q1 LASTEM Council meeting. Provided update on next steps.
  - Discussion started on the Council adopting a statewide definition of STEM that more accurately reflects STEM education's role in 21<sup>st</sup>-century career understanding and training.
  - A representative from the REC Foundation (VEX Robotics) presented on the role of

the RSCs in expanding robotics in Louisiana.

- Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) STEM Specialist representative provided an update to the Council on the work on which LDOE and LASTEM RSCs are collaborating.
- **August 10, 2023 (Meraux Foundation/Docville Farms, Violet):**
  - Hosted by Region 1 RSC and welcome provided by State Representative Matthew Willard, District 97 and Chair of STEM Innovation Caucus in the Louisiana House of Representatives.
  - LASTEM RSCs Year in Review and #SummerofLASTEM updates provided to the Council.
  - STEM Definition provided to the Council for review.
  - 2022-23 LASTEM fiscal year review of RSC metrics
  - Presentation to the Council on Nunez Community College's Wind Energy Program
  - Overview and Updates from LDOE's work with RCSs.
  - Update on the 2023 LASTEM Summit provided to the Council.
- **December 7, 2023 (Louisiana Universities Marine Consortium's Blue Works building, Houma):**
  - Hosted by BayouSTEM in partnership with LUMCON's Blue Works ribbon-cutting event.
  - Approval of the statewide definition of STEM (see next subsection)
  - Review of the 2023 LASTEM Summit metrics and plans for 2024 Summit.
  - Update from BayouSTEM on work with summer camps, connecting partners, and information on the new FIRST community team.

### **Adoption of a Statewide Definition of STEM**

In alignment with a nationwide initiative aimed at refining the STEM acronym for a clearer understanding among all stakeholders within the state, the LASTEM Advisory Council, during its 2023 meetings, undertook the responsibility of crafting a definition of STEM. This definition aimed to bring clarity to the role of STEM in hands-on learning, specifically focusing on its connection to career and workforce opportunities in high-demand technological sectors. The Council officially adopted the following definition during the Quarter 4 meeting.



- *STEM education, as defined by the Louisiana STEM Advisory Council (LASTEM), is an integrated approach to learning about scientific, technological, engineering, and mathematical concepts and processes as well as their application in careers and in life. STEM education cultivates critical thinking, analysis, and collaboration skills applicable in real-world contexts, which is critical for all Louisiana citizens. It emphasizes dynamic, hands-on, experiential learning across the STEM spectrum, enabling students to creatively solve real-world problems through innovative design thinking. Skills developed through STEM prepare learners for success by providing authentic experiences relevant to 21st-century life and work.*

### **Highlights from Regional STEM Centers**

**Region 1 (New Orleans Region):** Located within GNO, Inc., The Greater New Orleans Region One Center for Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (GNOrocs) is the driving force behind a series of impactful initiatives that have contributed significantly to the advancement of individuals in STEM fields. GNOrocs focuses on engaging populations typically not highly engaged in STEM, providing opportunities for all to benefit from the expansive opportunities. Initiatives include:

- The **Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) Innovation Internship Program**, GNOrocs' flagship activity, has demonstrated remarkable effectiveness in bridging the gap between students' academic pursuits and workforce opportunities. Designed to empower students from HBCUs, the program has successfully incubated a cadre of visionary individuals, injecting innovative concepts into the foundational fabric of the growing technological landscape. In 2023, 58 individuals went through the program.
- The **Women in STEM Empowerment (WISE) Women Mentorship Program** has achieved noteworthy success in cultivating 50 pioneering women in STEM. Through structured mentorship and guidance, the program has sparked passion and fortified ambitions, bringing individual success to participants and inspiring a previously underrepresented talent pool to pursue STEM.
- The **Sons in STEM Mentorship Program** exemplifies GNOrocs' unwavering commitment to providing opportunities for all students. By engaging young male students from underrepresented backgrounds, this initiative has nurtured a cohort of prospective leaders,

erasing barriers and providing skills for them to grow into STEM careers. To date, 80 young men have completed the program.

- The **GNOrocs Mini-Grant Program** has played a pivotal role in seeding innovation and nurturing grassroots initiatives. Aimed at empowering local innovators and educators, mini grants have laid the groundwork for progress, providing fertile soil for burgeoning ideas to thrive. To date, eight non-profit organizations have been recipients of awards which have impacted over 2200 individuals in the Greater New Orleans area.

In addition to RSC activities, GNOrocs has received \$150,000 in external grants from Boeing and Chevron to expand STEM programming in the region. In-kind gifts from partners such as NOBIC, OnPath Financial Credit Union, The Idea Village, Maroon, Inc., The Lab by TechPlug powered by Healthy Blue, and Docville Farms demonstrate the reach and diversity of partners within the Region 1 network. Through these concerted efforts, GNOrocs has adopted an innovative and multifaceted approach to enhance opportunities while cultivating a flourishing regional STEM ecosystem characterized by inclusivity, mentorship, and ingenuity.

**Region 2 (Greater Baton Rouge):** The Capital Area STEM Network Center, located at Louisiana State University and A&M College, has achieved noteworthy progress in the past year, emphasizing its commitment to elevating STEM learning and advancing workforce development through multiple initiatives:

- The **Spark Event**, tailored to single mothers, has engaged participants in skill-building activities centered around electrical work, HVAC, and automotive technologies.
- **Workshops on Computer Science for K-12 teachers**, developed in collaborating with diverse partners, including Ocean Commotion, Super Science Saturday, have provided essential training for classroom leaders.
- **Library-based STEM events** have reached thousands of parents and students, fostering a broader community impact.

The Center has been successful in securing substantial additional funding, notably \$1.75 million from the Louisiana Department of Education to facilitate the expansion of computer science offerings to benefit 1,000 K-5 teachers. Additionally, funds have been secured for the implementation of a Python certification course, which will benefit college students and contribute to the ongoing enhancement of the region's STEM education landscape.

**Region 3:** The Fletcher Technical Community College Regional STEM Center, Bayou STEM, has achieved active participation from all parishes it serves, a notable accomplishment given the region's rural character.

- Through dedicated implementation of the **Rural STEM Initiative**, BayouSTEM has recruited aspiring STEM students throughout the Bayou region, fostering increased engagement in STEM opportunities.
- Building upon the momentum established during the summer, BayouSTEM leads strong **STEM After-School (SAS) programming**. These activities ensure a continued and immersive STEM experience for students, expanding their educational and skill-building journeys beyond the traditional academic calendar.
- Funding has also been secured to establish a **community-based robotics team**, slated to participate in the 2023-24 competition season. Creating this team will not only enhance the commitment to hands-on learning, but it also provides a platform for students and community members to apply STEM knowledge in a competitive and collaborative setting.

**Region 4:** The Region 4 STEM Network Center, located at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, has launched innovative initiatives in 2023 to focus on K-12 STEM enrichment, teacher professional development, and community outreach.

- The **STEMulating Summer Initiative**, the principal K-12 STEM enrichment endeavor, was implemented for the third time in 2023. This initiative included the Acadiana STEM Fest and Iberia STEM Fest in May, along with a series of summer camps in June and July. Approximately 4,000 K-12 students were impacted, with the NASA Astro Camp alone drawing over 2,500 registrants across Region 4.
- The **Region 4 Novice Teacher Collaborative (R4NTC)** was launched in 2023 as a statewide initiative focused on new teacher retention. This network comprises selected science and math teachers with less than five years of teaching experience, meeting monthly for interactive sessions to support and reflect on their careers and classrooms.
- The R4NTC also facilitated **summer camps**, providing teachers opportunities to instruct beyond their regular curricula.
- In collaboration with the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) and the National Math and Science Initiative (NMSI), the Region 4 STEM Network Center developed the **STEM**

**Leadership Cohort learning** series, designed to prepare educators at all levels to lead local STEM initiatives and enhance professional development opportunities, ultimately improving STEM outcomes for Louisiana's students.

- The **WISE Women Acadiana mentorship program** was launched in collaboration with Region 1 STEM Network Center Director Daphne Barnes. This program focuses on providing mentorship opportunities to engage and inspire female high school students considering STEM careers by leveraging the expertise of women currently working in STEM, with a goal of increasing diversity within the Acadiana region's economic framework.

**Region 5:** Hosted by the Calcasieu Parish School Board, the Region 5 STEM Center in 2023 impacted approximately 10,500 individuals (pre-K to adults), averaging about 1,000 people per month.

- The Center leads numerous activities: **competitions, conferences, field trips, networking, professional development, school support visits, and summer camps.**
- The Center has established **partnerships with numerous industries, community organizations, local government, faith-based groups, the military, and mentoring programs.** Notable partners include Sasol, Phillips 66, LyondellBasell, Northrop Grumman, Air Products, Citgo, Cameron LNG, Junior Achievement, Girlie Girls, Big Brothers-Big Sisters, SOWELA Technical Community College, McNeese State University, LSU A&M, and the City of Lake Charles. These partners contribute funds, supplies, equipment, and expertise to support STEM opportunities and programs for students, teachers, parents, families, and the community.
- The Region 5 STEM Center is **open to public schools, private schools, homeschoolers, and the entire community.** Its goals include increasing competitive robotics, expanding field trips, growing the Region 5 network, enhancing STEM professional development opportunities for teachers, involving more industry partners, and providing STEM summer camps, all of which are increasingly realized during each year of operation.

**Region 6:** The Region 6 LaSTEM Center, CenlaSTEM, located at Northwestern State University, has focused efforts on bringing STEM opportunities to some of the most rural portions of the state. To guide its work, CenlaSTEM has developed the **RECIPE acronym – Relevant, Educational,**

**Career Minded, Impactful, Purposeful, and Engaging.** The RECIPE for Rural STEM focus, including multiple activities, ensures that students in rural areas have strong, engaging access to STEM programming and opportunities.

- An **Inventor Program**, aligned with the Henry Ford Museum's Independent Inventor program, was introduced to 5th grade students from Riverside Elementary as part of the Community School partnership. Middle school students in Alexandria will also pilot this program in spring 2024, with plans for a summer Independent Inventor camp held in collaboration with CLTCC. This program encourages students to think independently, use STEM to help their families and communities, and become future entrepreneurs.
- In March 2023 the first **RECIPE for Rural STEM Day**, led by CenlaSTEM in partnership with Regions 3 and 8 and hosted by LSUA at Alexandria's Mega Shelter, brought hundreds of 5th graders from Grant, Concordia, LaSalle, Lincoln, Rapides, Vernon and Winn parishes to experience hands-on STEM activities. LSUA will host this event again on February 8, 2024, but expanding to both 5th and 6th graders, to introduce more students from rural communities to STEM.
- The **Girls STEM program** for the Youth Challenge Program at Training Center Pineville held a second rotation in 2023, with plans to offer a STEM Day at the other two Youth Challenge Program locations in the next fiscal year.

**Region 7:** The Regional STEM Center at the Sci-Port Discovery Center has delivered several exciting programs throughout the 2023 calendar year, both hosted at the Sci-Port facility and reaching out into the communities served.

- Sci-Port engaged approximately 18,300 students, teachers, and chaperones through more than **320 field trips providing place-based hands-on STEM learning**.
- Multiple camps were hosted throughout the summer, including the **Artificial Intelligence Energy Camp** (2022 World Oil Award winning camp), a weeklong outreach to 20 students with community partners; onsite weeklong camps at Sci-Port (357 students); and offsite GSK Science in the Summer NGSS-aligned "Be a Physicist" camps for 870 second- through sixth graders across 30 different sites, 12 organizations, and five parishes.
- **Longitudinal informal STEM outreach** was conducted at three sites: Linwood Public Charter School, First Baptist Church, and Caddo Correctional Center.

- **“Bars without Barriers: Turning Incarcerated Parents into STEM Role Models”** was conducted weekly at Caddo Correctional Center with seven to eight offenders, non-incarcerated caregivers, and two to three children per offender. 80% of offenders completed all twelve two-hour sessions: six professional development (PD) sessions that alternated with family contact visits to practice what they learned. Sessions covered the scientific method, engineering design process, childhood development, science outdoors, microscopy, air & flight, household chemistry, safety, and electronics. Concomitant to these sessions, offenders completed carpentry and fiberoptics certification coursework in the Re-entry program.
- **Community events** included the Barksdale Airforce Base Defenders of Liberty Airshow Hangar Full of STEM, populated by 80 STEM booths demonstrating drones, forensics, colleges, universities, STARBASE, Cyber.Org, and Sci-Port, visited by 5,000 families; and the Red River Revel, during which 3,500 fourth grade students engaged in hands-on STEAM activities. Astronomy Fridays, Mission to Mars, and Eclipse programming were offered to students, teachers, and the public.
- **FIRST Tech Challenge and FIRST Robotics Competition Community Teams** were continued and started, respectively, for the region.
- **STEM funding of \$135,500** was raised to support the Center’s outreach work.
- Center staff met with **nine organizations to discuss STEM job needs** in the region, and a career announcements section was added to the Region 7 newsletter.
- Eleven **job training programs** were conducted, along with 63 teacher professional development programs training 342 educators.

**Region 8:** Located at Louisiana Tech University, the SCILS Region 8 LaSTEM Center serves 11 parishes in northeast Louisiana. The Center has successfully established intentional and strategic partnerships in 10 of the 11 parishes across its service areas over just two years, with plans to incorporate the final parish this year. Additionally, services are provided to Lincoln Parish despite its inclusion in Region 7.

- The **Center’s flagship program, CS4U**, has been recognized for the second consecutive year as an official Commitment-Maker for the global CSforALL organization, focusing on raising awareness around computer science. This program has expanded to include more

dates, more students, and a wider reach thanks to its partnership with Louisiana Delta Community College and mobile capability added this year.

- **Workforce outreach** has increased through a partnership with United Way of Northeast Louisiana and the distribution of its 2023 SCILS STEM Workforce Analysis Report.

**Region 9:** The Northshore Regional STEM Center, located at Southeastern Louisiana University, provides three signature projects and several activities to help stakeholders network and build relationships, social capital, increase access, and build regional capacity for STEM workforce development:

- The annual **Back-to-School STEM Fest** at Southeastern brings together a broad range of community members to join in STEM activities and information-gathering.
- Monthly **Community STEM Cafes** provide STEM information and access throughout the region.
- The **Brain Food Truck** provides mobile STEM resources throughout Region 9, traveling to users and ensuring access to all.
- **Robotics teams** are supported by a two-day fall Robotics Mentoring Extravaganza with workshops led by faculty and community subject-matter experts hosted in labs at Southeastern and Northshore Technical Community College, as well as a spring Sea Perch underwater robotics regional competition.
- Northshore STEM leads the statewide **Louisiana Scholastic Esports Federation** and the **Louisiana STEM Outreach Expansion AmeriCorps VISTA Project**.

In 2023 Northshore STEM served more than 7,000 youth and adults, connecting them with over 50 organizations throughout the region to inspire and support their STEM workforce interest and development. An external evaluation survey of youth program participants in K-12 grades by the Harvard PEAR Institute found nationally normed outcomes for youth of all ages were statistically significant across eight survey measures: STEM Identity, STEM Career Interest, STEM Career Knowledge, Enjoyment of STEM, Access to STEM Activities, Perseverance, Critical Thinking, and Relationships with Peers and Adults. This positive impact was found across genders and race, with even greater positive impact for girls and African American youth.

## **2023 Federal Congressionally Driven Spending Award Update**

LASTEM was successful in securing a \$1 million Federal Congressionally Driven Spending (CDS) request to purchase classroom resources to implement the Boston Museum of Sciences' Engineering is Elementary (EIE) elementary education curriculum in Louisiana. The request was collaboratively submitted by LASTEM, the RSCs and LDOE STEM team members. The funding will introduce elementary-level students to engineering and computer science concepts and skills through EIE programming, as well as provide teacher professional development. Funds were awarded in October and teacher training will begin statewide in 2024.

## **LASTEM Annual Summit**

The 2023 LASTEM Summit, themed "STEM Today; Success Tomorrow," took place at the University of Louisiana-Lafayette's Cajundome and Convention Center on October 17, 2023. The event drew approximately 750 registrants, featured 45 presenters, and hosted 60 education support organizations. Activities included robotics and e-sports demonstrations/team scrimmages, K-16 teacher workshops, and hands-on STEM experiences in the 'Playground' exhibition area.

The Summit highlighted Louisiana's dynamic STEM education-workforce programs and the dedicated individuals involved, with a keynote address from Mr. Mark Perna, a national STEM leader and author of *Answering Why: Unleashing Passion, Purpose, and Performance in Younger Generations*.

This year's Summit set attendance records, underscoring the lasting impact of the LASTEM initiative in the state. Attendees expressed enthusiasm for the engaging conversations and activities, with many planning to integrate their experiences into their STEM work.

Looking ahead, the 2024 Annual Summit is scheduled to return to the University of Louisiana-Lafayette's Cajundome and Convention Center in October 2024. Registration details will be accessible on the LASTEM website in Spring 2024.

## **Third Annual LASTEM Directors' Retreat**

On December 8, 2023, LASTEM's Board of Regents administrative staff, the LDOE STEM team, and RSC directors gathered for the third annual LASTEM Directors' Retreat at Fletcher Technical Community College in Houma. The retreat, hosted by LASTEM's Region 3 RSC, BayouSTEM, and facilitated by LASTEM Program Administrator Dr. Clint Coleman, brought



together RSC directors and program administrative staff to assess individual and collective progress and establish plans for 2024. The Retreat also provided an opportunity to discuss Board of Regents processes, LDOE STEM goals, and future opportunities for the RSCs.

Discussions centered on expanding statewide initiatives, expanding workforce development activities and partnerships, and devising ways to measure progress. The group decided to create a form to provide regular updates on relevant information related to individual statewide initiatives. In addition, the group began planning for a process to identify partners within the LASTEM network. The team collectively agreed to develop a form that all RSCs could use to announce collaborations with external groups, such as STEM NOLA, and other engaged partners.

The retreat resulted in a deeper understanding among RSC directors regarding the value of expanding collaboration and keeping both other RSCs and non-LASTEM stakeholders aware of ongoing work and opportunities for both collaboration and leveraging of multiple activities.

### **III: Conclusion**

The progress and achievements of the Louisiana Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics Advisory Council (LASTEM) throughout 2023 showcase a robust commitment to advancing STEM education and workforce development in the state. Enacted through Act 392 of the 2017 Regular Session, LASTEM has successfully coordinated and overseen the creation, delivery, and promotion of STEM education programs, increasing students of all ages interest and achievement in STEM fields, and increasing alignment with Louisiana's economic development, industry, and workforce needs.

The Council has diligently worked to achieve its goals. Notably, the RSCs, an integral part of LASTEM's strategy, have made significant strides. The continuation of all nine RSCs for an additional three years (2023-2026) reflects their positive impact. Quarterly meetings showcased the tailored approaches of RSCs, featured collaborations with STEM organizations and champions, and provided opportunities to visit STEM-centric facilities. The adoption of a statewide STEM definition in 2023 aligned with a national initiative to enhance clarity and understanding of STEM education-workforce pathways.

Furthermore, the achievements of specific RSCs in different regions highlight their diverse and impactful contributions. Initiatives such as the HBCU Innovation Internship Program in New Orleans, the Spark Event for single mothers in Baton Rouge, and the Rural STEM Initiatives in several RSCs exemplify the innovative and inclusive approaches taken by the LASTEM network.

The culmination of these efforts was the impactful 2023 LASTEM Summit, which set attendance records, highlighted community enthusiasm for STEM learning, and emphasized the enduring influence of LASTEM's leadership.

Looking ahead, the planning and discussions during the 3rd Annual LASTEM Directors' Retreat indicate a forward-thinking approach to improving data assessment, expanding statewide initiatives, and fostering partnerships within and beyond the LASTEM network.

In summary, LASTEM's achievements in 2023 reflect a concerted effort to advance STEM education and workforce development in Louisiana, setting the stage for increasing success in the years to come.