



**Fourth Quarter LASTEM Advisory Council Meeting  
December 7, 2023  
10:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.**

The LASTEM Advisory Council met on Thursday, December 7, 2023, at LUMCON's Blue Works facility in Houma, Louisiana.

**Committee Members/Representatives Present**

Kaneisha Akinpelumi (Proxy – Dr. Ashwith Chilvery)  
Larry Carter, Jr.  
Robin Cosenza  
Bianca Deliberto (Proxy – Tammy Brouillette)  
Jawanda Givens (arrived after roll call)  
Crystal Gordon  
Paul Helton  
Commissioner Kim Hunter Reed  
Lindsey Keith-Vincent  
David Lafargue (Proxy – Dr. Charles Stewart)  
Calvin Mackie (Proxy – Dr. Lawrence Jackson)  
Francesca Mellieon-Williams (Proxy – Dr. Harold Mellieon)  
Jamie Mixon  
Ronnie Morris  
Frank Neubrandner (Proxy – Vanessa Begat)  
Kellie Taylor-White  
Christen Timmins (arrived after roll call)  
Rachel Vincent-Finley (Proxy – Gloria Thomas Fuller)

**Committee Members Not Present**

Brian Davis  
Patty Glasser  
Jim Henderson

Sen. Sharon Hewitt  
Taya Loupe  
Melissa Mann  
Susie Schowen  
Rep. Vincent St. Blanc  
Tina Watts  
Jaimee Williams  
Tom Yura

**Staff Members Present**

Clint Coleman  
Christine Norton  
Carrie Robison  
Jennifer Stevens

**Guests & STEM Center Directors**

Mark Arseneault, STEM Center Director  
Daphine Barnes, STEM Center Director  
Angela Boxie, STEM Center Director  
Wendy Conarro, STEM Center Director  
Summer Dann, STEM Center Director  
Jennifer DePriest, STEM Center Director  
Heather Kleiner, STEM Center Director  
Christie Landry, STEM Center Director  
Dr. Brian Roberts, LUMCON  
Regent Gary Soloman Jr., Board of Regents

**Welcome and Roll Call**

Commissioner Reed welcomed all attendees and called the meeting to order at 10:08 a.m. She introduced a guest, Ms. Jada Walden, a student in the Urban Forestry program at Southern University A&M who serves with her on the Aspen Institute's Planet Ed Higher Education Climate Action Task Force. Dr. Coleman introduced four new Council members, Robin Cosenza, Taya Loupe, Jamie Mixon, and Susie Schowen, called roll, and noted that quorum was obtained.

Next, he introduced Dr. Brian Roberts, Executive Director and Chief Scientist of LUMCON, to extend his welcome. Following Dr. Roberts' remarks, Mr. Ronnie Morris asked about the type of research being conducted at Blue Works. Dr. Roberts noted the labs span from biology to chemistry and geology,

and the facility also houses a technology interface with high-resolution cameras and imagery plus incorporating sound and sonar to track how organisms move through water.

Last, Dr. Coleman shared a farewell letter from Senator Sharon Hewitt, whose vision and support helped bring LASTEM to fruition. Commissioner Reed expressed her appreciation of Senator Hewitt's work and commitment.

### **Approval of Second and Third Quarter Meeting Minutes**

Next, Commissioner Reed called for a motion to approve both the second and third quarter meeting minutes.

*On motion of Ms. Kellie Taylor-White, seconded by Mr. Paul Helton, the Council approved the second and third quarter meeting minutes.*

### **STEM Definition Review & Approval**

Moving into the next agenda item, Commissioner Reed noted that a proposed STEM definition had been discussed in multiple meetings but had not yet been officially approved. She asked the Council to affirm that it accurately reflects its views and thinking. Dr. Coleman reviewed the definition again and opened the floor for discussion.

Dr. Lawrence Jackson, STEM NOLA, noted that an experiential component was missing from the definition. Commissioner Reed responded the experiential component was included in the third section of the definition, clarifying that the full STEM definition under consideration included all paragraphs. Mr. Morris extended a formal invitation to bring this definition to BESE next year. Dr. Gloria Thomas-Fuller, Southern University A&M, suggested incorporating a statement capturing the importance of STEM education for all Louisiana citizens, not just those who think they may be interested in STEM fields. The definition was amended as follows to capture this idea: "STEM education cultivates critical thinking, analysis, and collaboration skills applicable in real-world contexts, which is critical for all Louisiana citizens." Commissioner Reed called for a motion to approve the definition as amended.

*On motion of Ms. Jamie Mixon, seconded by Ms. Kellie Taylor-White, the Council approved the STEM definition as amended.*

### **LASTEM Summit Review**

Dr. Coleman provided a recap of the 2023 LASTEM Summit and noted the external funding received throughout the past year for LASTEM. Following was a discussion about SeaPerch, including its underwater robots, age groups, and competitions. Commissioner Reed opened the floor for comments. Capital Area STEM Director, Summer Dann, stated that the Million Women Mentor breakout session with Alison Bordelon had a great turnout with positive feedback.

### **LDOE/STEM Center Collaborations**

Next, Dr. John Underwood provided an update on LDOE's vision for computer science and quality STEM as well as collaborations with the Regional STEM Centers. Ms. Jamie Mixon, Computer Science and STEM Supervisor for LDOE, added that she was excited that the Council adopted the STEM definition as it mirrors LDOE's work. She added that she appreciated the relationships with the STEM Centers, that the projects presented will continue throughout the fiscal year, and that LDOE will present the computer science plan to BESE during the following week.

Mr. Morris asked about the timeline for teacher engagement, the target population, and the response to date. Dr. Underwood stated the computer science projects have already begun broadcasting their recruitment messaging and have generated a good response so far. In addition, they will be bringing an allocation request to BESE with the goal of offering at least one educator at each K-5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup> physical school site the opportunity to attend the training, with trainings starting in February for both programs and concluding by the end of June. The robotics pilot is operating and LDOE expects enough interest for a second group. Work to secure funds is underway. For training with the leadership team at ULL, teachers have been identified and accepted, with the timeline for training from February through June.

Mr. Morris noted that the collaborative efforts of LDOE and the STEM Centers are making education relevant to the students. He suggested bringing students to a BESE meeting to provide a powerful message of how education is being made relevant, which could expand opportunities. Ms. Mixon responded

that conversations with the directors are ongoing and focused especially on robotics pilots. She said she will add that piece into the conversations as they are still in the planning process.

Ms. Tammy Brouillette asked how computer science would fit into the school day and whether it would become a standard. Dr. Underwood stated that standalone electives are geared more towards 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grades. For K-8<sup>th</sup> grades, they are considering two possibilities: recommending K-12 computer science standards to the standards creation committee or determining where standards fit and giving guidance to teachers. LDOE is trying to ignite and energize teachers to ensure easier integration when the standards do come into place. The plan is to enrich the practice and give the teachers another tool in their toolkit, not overburden them. Ms. Brouillette also mentioned it could start earlier with young children in computer labs but many schools are ending support for librarians and computer lab teachers. She hoped that LDOE could find a way to fund and implement the initiative, as well as relay its importance and necessity.

Ms. Christen Timmins commented that she is also excited about this work, which is long overdue, and that currently most of the STEM activities are done as electives. She stated, from a math perspective, that students do not see the relevance of math and encouraged work with LDOE to provide incentives for school districts to implement this in classrooms. Ms. Mixon noted that the robotics pilot is aligned with her comments, indicating that LDOE shares her concerns and is working to address them.

Dr. Jackson asked about opportunities to develop an afterschool component to supplement and provide access to resources. Dr. Underwood mentioned an opportunity, currently being developed in partnership with the LASTEM directors, for K-12 schools to obtain interest and opportunity points in their school performance score for partnering with national or state-led after-school clubs and initiatives with high-value quality STEM. The Regional STEM Centers are helping to bridge some of these after-school connections and contacts. Commissioner Reed commented that the magic happens when people realize everything is based in STEM, and the comments about relevance are very important.

Dr. Gloria Thomas-Fuller asked about sustainability, keeping the training evergreen to ensure training is still useful as technology evolves. Dr. Underwood noted that LDOE has two great partners (SLU and LSU), both of whom have committed to pursuing future grants to continue working and growing as well as maintaining a focus on basic skills, coding concepts, and foundational pedagogy. He also mentioned the state partnership with code.org, which has pledged free training and development of resources in the future. He concluded by noting that the team has been very successful in pursuing all avenues of funding and securing dollars.

### **Region 3 Update**

BayouSTEM Director Christie Landry provided an update on the region's partners, programs, and goals. Ms. Taylor-White asked about the green infrastructure inspection and the level of certification, specifically related to the Industry-Based Certification Council for statewide offering. Ms. Landry indicated that she would check with the instructor and provide a response.

### **2024 Meeting Dates**

Dr. Coleman announced the Council's quarterly meeting dates for 2024:

1<sup>st</sup> Quarter: February 22

2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter: May 2

3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter: August 15

4<sup>th</sup> Quarter: November 14

Commissioner Reed noted her appreciation for the opportunities provided to the Council to see STEM in our backyards. She asked Council members to send to Dr. Coleman recommendations of locations for future LASTEM quarterly meetings.

### **Other Business and Adjournment**

Commissioner Reed asked for any other comments or new business to come before the Council. Mr. Morris referred to Ms. Timmins' previous math comments, stating that the math standards review will start in early 2025, with committee members named later this year. He also asked if there are community partnerships with the YMCA. Dr. Coleman responded that several of the Regional STEM Centers have established these partnerships.

CENLA STEM Director Jennifer DePriest announced that Recipe for Rural STEM day would be held on February 8, 2024, for 5-6<sup>th</sup> graders. Regions 3, 6, and 8 partnered in staging this event, which will take place at the Mega Shelter in Alexandria, Louisiana.

***There being no other comments or business, a motion to adjourn was made by Ms. Tammy Brouillette and seconded by Mr. Ronnie Morris. With all in agreement, the meeting was adjourned at 11:41 a.m.***