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## First-Quarter LASTEM Advisory Council Meeting February 6, 2025 10:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

The LASTEM Advisory Council met on Thursday, February 6, 2025, at the STEM Library Lab in Metairie, Louisiana.

### Committee Members/Representatives

#### Present

Kaneisha Akinpelumi  
Mark Bond  
Blake Bertuccelli-Booth  
Dr. Suresh Chiruguru  
Emily DiPalma  
Crystal Gordon  
Commissioner Kim Hunter Reed  
(Proxy – Carrie Robison)  
Dr. David Lafargue  
Jean May-Brett  
Dr. Francesca Mellieon-Williams  
Jamie Mixon  
Ronnie Morris  
Dr. Frank Neubrander  
Dr. Wendi Palermo (Proxy – Melissa  
Lacour)  
Christen Timmins  
Richard Vath  
Sara Wolfe

#### Committee Members Not Present

Larry Carter, Jr.  
Robin Cosenza  
Dr. Patty Glasser  
Camille Ivy-O'Connell Bentin

#### Welcome and Roll Call

Ms. Carrie Robison, Deputy Commissioner for Sponsored Programs at the Louisiana Board of Regents, welcomed all attendees and called the meeting to order at 10:02 am. Dr. Coleman called roll, noting quorum was obtained. Next, he

Taya Loupe  
Dr. Calvin Mackie  
Melissa Mann  
Dr. Lealon Martin  
Senator Beth Mizell  
Representative Vincent St. Blanc  
Jolen Stein  
David St. Etienne  
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  
Summer Dann, STEM Center Director  
Dr. Heather Kleiner, STEM Center  
Director  
Christie Landry, STEM Center Director  
Todd Wackerman, STEM Library Lab

introduced Mr. Todd Wackerman, Executive Director of the STEM Library Lab, to provide welcoming remarks. Mr. Wackerman spoke briefly about the Lab and expressed his excitement that the Council was on site.

### **Approval of Third and Fourth-Quarter Meeting Minutes**

Next, Dr. Coleman called for a motion for approval of the third and fourth-quarter meeting minutes.

***On motion of Ms. Jean May-Brett, seconded by Ms. Crystal Gordon, the Council approved the third- and fourth-quarter meeting minutes.***

Dr. Coleman introduced new Council members. The governor's appointees included:

- Dr. Suresh Chiruguru, a Science Peer Coach and Mentor at LaGrange High School in Lake Charles
- Ms. Sara Wolfe, Assistant Director of Grants at BRF, located in Shreveport
- Returning member Dr. Calvin Mackie, President and CEO of STEM NOLA in New Orleans

New members designated by Louisiana Economic Development included:

- Mr. Blake Bertuccelli-Booth, Founder and CEO of Equalify, located in New Orleans
- Ms. Jolen Stein, Senior Director of the Peoples Services Team at BASF in Geismar

### **Update from Region 1 STEM Center**

Dr. Coleman introduced Ms. Daphne Barnes, Region 1 director at GNO, Inc., who provided an update on internships and programs offered by the GNOrocs Center across the greater New Orleans region.

Ms. Gordon asked about a previous intern who had created a startup company and was featured on Good Morning America (GMA). Ms. Barnes responded, noting that two former GNOrocs interns have created startup companies: Victoria Hardy from Dillard University and Naomi Winston, who was featured on GMA with her startup, Coloring for Change.

### **Update from Louisiana Department of Education**

Dr. Coleman introduced Ms. Jamie Mixon, Computer Science and STEM Supervisor at the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE), who provided an overview of Louisiana Content Standards for English language arts (ELA) and mathematics, as well as computer science and teacher education programs.

Dr. LaFargue asked if the computer science steering committee represented rural and small schools as well as larger urban schools. Ms. Mixon indicated that these different school types were included and that LDOE was very strategic in creating the rubric for the scoring process. In addition, she stated the mathematics and ELA standards will be considered by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) in October and instructional materials aligned to the new standards adopted following approval.

Dr. Coleman asked what might change in the mathematics and ELA standards. Ms. Mixon replied that foundational concepts are important, and LDOE will be looking for vertical alignment and progression. Mr. Bertuccelli-Booth showed appreciation for the inclusion of

special education. Ms. Timmins asked about the timeline for implementation. Ms. Mixon stated that if the rule-making process and public comment period proceed as planned, the new standards might be implemented in the 2026-27 school year, though it is too early to be certain. She added that LDOE is not anticipating large shifts. Ms. Timmins also asked her to expand on the 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade standards and pathways. Mr. Morris indicated that he hoped to see integration of career pathway concepts into the mathematics standards.

In regard to computer science and teacher education prep program standards, Ms. Mixon asked the Council for feedback on proposed language for Act 211, to make it more specific and provide guidance for teacher preparation programs.

Ms. Akinpelumi asked whether Artificial Intelligence (AI) will be incorporated into Act 211 or any other requirements. Ms. Mixon stated that LDOE has already released a guidance document and that the writers chose not to put it explicitly into the standards, given the risk that the standards would become outdated at the technology advances. Instead, the term “emerging technologies” was used, which enables multiple technological advances to be addressed without the standards becoming obsolete. Mr. Morris shared that he received feedback from teachers in a pilot program located within high schools in Livingston Parish and reported that teachers are excited about using AI as a tool to save time in managing tasks and resources. Mr. Bertuccelli-Booth acknowledged there is currently an AI “hype wave” and it could be a learning opportunity to mention AI and the rapid pace of technology development within the standards. Mr. Morris added that there is a population afraid of emerging technologies and education systems need to be sensitive to those groups. Ms. Timmins asked whether changes would apply to alternative certifications, and Ms. Mixon responded that they would apply to all certification pathways and to new programs being approved, but not retroactive to programs already in place.

### **Edopportunities Database**

Dr. Coleman asked Mr. Wackerman to discuss opportunities to connect with the STEM Library Lab. Mr. Wackerman provided a brief overview of the STEM Library Lab and a demonstration of the Edopportunities Database, explaining the Lab’s vision for its further development. He asked the LASTEM Council and directors for help in growing and expanding the database statewide. Mr. Morris advised that the Teacher Leader Summit would be a great platform to demonstrate and promote the database.

### **LASTEM Report-Out**

Dr. Coleman provided a recap of the Fourth-Quarter LASTEM Advisory Council and National Science Foundation meetings held during the week of November 11-15, 2024, at Louisiana Tech University. In addition, he discussed the 2025 LASTEM Legislative Report, the ongoing work and accomplishments of the nine Regional STEM Centers, new LASTEM initiatives and opportunities, and recent events. He concluded by celebrating the several Louisiana recipients of the Presidential Award for Excellence in STEM Mentoring.

### **Other Business and Adjournment**

Dr. Coleman announced that the next quarterly meeting would be held on May 1, 2025, in the Claiborne Building in Baton Rouge. Mr. Morris, noting the average truancy rate in Baton Rouge is 55%, stated that research has shown a correlation between school attendance and STEM learning. He encouraged LASTEM to consider ways in which this issue could be brought to the attention of legislators in the upcoming Regular Session.

Ms. Robison invited any other comments or new business. With no additional comments or items for discussion, through unanimous consent of the members, the Council adjourned at 11:44 a.m.