

**Minutes**  
**K4-12 Advisory Board of the Lowcountry Graduate Center**  
**For Teacher Education and Administrative Leadership**  
**Thursday, September 29, 2016**

The meeting began shortly after 4:30 p.m. at the Lowcountry Graduate Center (LGC). Nancy Muller welcomed everyone and thanked all present for their willingness to serve on the LGC's newest Advisory Board. A list of Board members and their contact information was included among materials distributed at the meeting. Each member introduced him or herself and described briefly both one's job responsibilities as well as work setting. Invited guests present were Dr. Larry Daniel, Dean of the Zucker Family School of Education at The Citadel, and Paul Nisbet, independent market researcher. They also introduced themselves to the Board. The Board purposely encompasses public and private schools, as well as community partners such as the Charleston Metro Chamber and the STEM Lowcountry Collaborative.

Unable to attend this inaugural meeting were:

- Dr. Gwendolyn Bright, Director of Accountability & Staff, Dorchester County District 4
- Dr. Valerie Harrison, Interim Chief Academic Officer, Charleston County School District
- Carmelina Livingston, Program Manager, STEM Lowcountry Collaborative

Muller gave a brief background of the LGC, its mission, and its history. She explained that this is one of three Advisory Boards recently created around targeted employment sectors, based on recent market research of "talent gaps" between job postings and qualifications of the local population, areas of highest growth and absolute size of employment base, and impacts of forecast population growth. The infographic summarizing this research is attached to these minutes.

The three sectors for the LGC's program pursuits are:

- Advanced manufacturing, engineering services, and software development/IT support
- Healthcare management and community wellness
- K4-12 Education for Teachers and Administrative Leadership (including education of future principals and superintendents, counselors, and other support staff leadership)

The biggest challenge facing private and public schools, with respect to both teacher retention and staff development, is low teacher pay, restricting the financial resources of teachers to self-fund tuition for their graduate level education and

continued professional advancement. In DC, teacher salary is \$60,000, whereas in Beaufort County it is \$40,000. In Colleton, it is \$31,000 and fixed without merit or cost-of-living increases for the last three years due to a loss in population and tax revenue base. A master's degree or certificate does not bring a huge jump in pay either. Private schools do, however, provide a financial incentive to teachers obtaining a graduate degree. Berkeley County diverted its additional, budgeted expense this year entirely to increase teacher pay instead of supplementing professional development and graduate studies by teachers. Most needed in on-going professional development are:

- **Teaching children ESOL whose first language is not English**
- **Closing achievement gaps in writing, reading comprehension, and math**
- **Teaching children with special needs and learning disabilities**
- **Meeting Read-To-Succeed mandated requirements**, especially by elementary school teachers (who need four courses compared to one course by middle and high school teachers). Having heard that the required rigor is missing in the state's e learning, Berkeley County School District developed its own internal course free of charge for its teachers, using CANVAS software. (Professional development courses and programs of study are available from The Citadel, one of only four in the state with international accreditation. The Citadel's program is cohort-driven and thus one that goes out into region to groups of teachers, such as it has recently done in Jasper County, Daniel explained.)
- **Implementing successful use of Google's Chrome books** (read about a case study in Arlington, Texas: <https://www.google.com/edu/case-studies/arlington-independent-school-district/>)
- **Curriculum development and skill sets for implementing what industry leaders consider vital** for high school graduates to have as pipeline, future employees
- **Principal preparation and succession planning.** The Catholic Schools have a big push for "principal formation" because 1/3 of all principals at its 36 schools statewide are at retirement age or beyond. A brief discussion ensued regarding possible private foundation funding for such endeavors.

Teacher retirement is also a growing concern because today's undergraduates are not pursuing teacher education majors but instead seeking more lucrative fields in medicine, biosciences, IT and engineering. Younger generations are also discouraged by the challenging working conditions, including large class size and the wide range of student capabilities and preparedness, especially in public schools. This is narrower and more closely controlled in private schools by admission and other policies. One member spoke about effort to develop a "teacher leader" by department and by grade level, to help mentor and be an example to others.

A brief discussion ensued about differences in attitudes among generations of teachers. The Millennial generation values their personal lives and time away from work. They are also less committed to a single organization or company, instead comfortable frequently changing jobs and even careers. This complicates retention and compromises making investments in staff development. Daniel mentioned that The Citadel is undertaking a big effort Citadel-wide to move offerings online to improve ease of access to older, working adults.

Muller suggested that the LGC undertake a survey of teachers across the Lowcountry to collect their concerns and goals with respect to graduate-level studies. Those present expressed their willingness to disseminate such a survey. Nisbet suggested a conditional test design that includes both hiring and retention questions but allows us to ask relevant questions, depending on how initial questions are answered so as to minimize the total length and complexity of the survey. The general feeling is that such a survey should not require more than 10-12 minutes to complete. Muller said that she would start to outline such a survey and provide it to Board members – as well as institutions of higher education in the state – for input and refinement. The survey will be anonymous but districts or organizations in which respondents work will receive tabulation in the aggregate, as well as comparison of their organization to the survey results as a whole. Individual responses will not be accessible. Muller was cautioned not to ask too many descriptive questions of respondents such that their individual identities could be otherwise revealed by their answers.

Rhoads shared the fact that only 50% of all teachers in the state vote. Given the political landscape and its impact on funding for public education – or the lack thereof – it is critical that teachers and school administrators encourage each other to vote for candidates who are supportive of their needs and willing to fund solutions to overcome the challenges faced by schools.

Muller promised to establish soon a date for the next meeting when the survey will be discussed and finalized. Look for an email with a Doodle.com link. Minutes will be forthcoming. The meeting adjourned at approximately 6:00 p.m.

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October 14, 2016