



# Minutes of the April 5, 2021 Meeting of the LGC Advisory Board in K4-12 Teacher Education and Educational Leadership

Via Zoom

## **Participants:**

- Nancy Muller – LGC
- Jonathan Solomon – LGC
- Fran Welch – College of Charleston
- Brian Lanahan – College of Charleston
- Darlene Anderson – Northwood Academy
- Juliet White – Beaufort County School District
- Robin Willis – Charleston Metro Chamber of Commerce
- Terri Nichols – Charleston County School District

## **Guest Speaker:** Brian Lanahan, Ed.D.

**Bio:** Dr. Brian Lanahan is an Associate Professor in the School of Education at the College of Charleston (CofC), and the Program Director of the Master in the Art of Teaching (MAT) – Elementary Education program. He earned his masters from the University of California at Santa Barbara in 2001, where his thesis was on English as a Second Language and Mathematics. In 2006, Dr. Lanahan earned his Doctor in Education in Curriculum and Instruction from the University of Florida. His dissertation was on elementary social studies methods instructions.

Dr. Lanahan’s research interests include: Post-Conflict Democracy Education; Elementary and Early Childhood Social Studies Methods; Teacher Education Methods; and Multicultural Education and Diversity Issues.

In 2008, he earned a Fulbright Scholarship with the U.S. State Department and has experience researching international education in post-conflict regions such as Sarajevo. Upon graduating from Troy State University, he served as a Corps Member of Teach for America.

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The LGC K-12 Education Advisory Board meeting began shortly after 3:00 p.m. with an introduction of guest speaker, Dr. Lanahan, by CofC School of Education Dean, Dr. Fran Welch. Brief self-introductions were made by each of the LGC advisory board members present.

Dr. Lanahan began his presentation regarding the “fast track” Master in Art of Teaching – Elementary Education (MAT) program at the College of Charleston and the work being done to revitalize and update the program.

Prior to fiscal year 2019, the MAT in Elementary Education’s enrollment was declining which caused the program to undergo necessary changes to revamp it. Now with about 20 students enrolled, the program is being shifted to a “4+1” (4 years of undergraduate program plus 1 year of grad school) program. The hope is that this will draw students immediately following completion of their undergraduate studies with majors in non-education fields directly into graduate school, drawing in particular on its own College of Charleston students. The program is also designed to push students directly into schools to begin working early with young children in elementary grades.

The national trend for teacher graduate programs has shifted to more 4+1 and 5<sup>th</sup> year certification models. Compared to the old program of study, the program cuts cost and makes it more competitive with other programs across the state, while also providing a better full-time schedule for students. The new program format accelerates the program from two years to 12-13 months.

According to the old program of study format, students would enter the Fall semester and would have a substantial course load every semester, including Summer. Under the new program format, students would enter in the program in the Summer, which would be split into two fast-paced express sessions with classes every day. In the Fall term, 15-18 credit hours would be taken in full semester-formats. In a student’s Spring semester, they would have a clinical practice every day and constituting 9 academic credit hours, plus a hybrid course, for a combined 12 credit hours. Students finish their degree in a Summer I express term with two courses which again is fast-paced and meeting daily for approximately six weeks.

In its new, accelerated format, this MAT program is \$24,000 and considered comparable to the cost of other in-state institutions with similar programs.

The students being attracted to this program are very high-achieving and are mostly career changers. The program is also demonstrating positive outcomes with 100% job placement where everyone in the program has been offered and/or signed for a position in a K-6 classroom teaching position upon graduation.

Currently, the program is trying to attract high achieving out-of-state students using abatements to bring tuition and thus the cost more in line with in-state levels. With four scholarships/tuition abatements, out of state students are currently enrolling from primarily the Northeast; namely: New York, Connecticut, and Massachusetts.

Regarding long-term plans, the School of Education and those associated with the program are looking to tighten the timeline even further in order for students to finish by May. This will make the program more cost effective and attractive.

## Q&As & Discussions:

- Juliet White, employed by Beaufort County School District, asked about “non-traditional” students and whether there are any discussions regarding an online-only degree options for the MAT in Elementary Education, as well as helping para-professionals already in schools obtain their certifications or masters.
  - o Dr. Lanahan responded stating that there have been some conversations within the School of Education, primarily with Dr. Weeks, the Associate Dean, about organizing some kind of pipeline or scholarship to help para-professionals advance their careers through further education.
  - o As for online, Dr. Lanahan stated that the program currently relies on the person-to-person experiences. He therefore considers its quality to be higher than most online alternatives. Although some limited coursework is taught in a hybrid format; it is primarily a face-to-face program taught traditionally in person.
  
- Nancy Muller, Director of the Lowcountry Graduate Center, asked Darlene Anderson from Northwood Academy about the value of a program like the MAT in Elementary Education to the private school sector.
  - o Ms. Anderson stated that Northwood Academy does hire a lot of people who do not have a formal teacher certification and thus may lack “education pedagogy” in their background. She believed this program could be beneficial and helpful through the high school level. It is a bigger benefit that a program like this is affordable and doable given it can be completed in 14 months.
  
- Nancy Muller asked Dr. Lanahan about recruitment of students and how he targets non-education majors amongst undergraduate students at the College.
  - o There is some on-campus recruitment with likely candidates from majors such as anthropology, sociology, and psychology. Junior and senior seminars are where some recruitment has taken place. There has been interest from international business and business students who tend to be high achieving.
  - o Yet, the MAT is like every other graduate program on campus working to attract applicants from the College of Charleston’s own pool of undergraduate students.
  
- Dr. Lanahan asked Terri Nichols, from Charleston County School District, if the school district is aware of how the MAT has revised and restructured.
  - o Mrs. Nichols affirmed that she and others work with many of the same people as the College’s School of Education and that the collaboration has been helpful.
  
- Ms. Nichols was asked if there was any feedback she could share regarding teacher and T.A. professional development.
  - o Charleston County School District is looking at how to help teachers and TA’s advance their careers and education. Currently, the district is collecting data to see where people are in their careers and their educational attainment.

- Ms. White asked whether Charleston School District provides any tuition assistance for staff and faculty, and the process by which the district pays for the educational advancement of teachers.
  - o According to Ms. Nichols, there are line items within the budget that provide some tuition assistance.
  - o The processes to ensure efficient payment to higher educational institutions and less of a burden on faculty/staff, are being worked out. Ideally, the Charleston County School District would like the process to be direct payments to the university. In regard to the process of tuition assistance through the school district, the faculty/staff member may have to pay roughly 50%, but the details are still being worked out and final decisions have not been made on how the program will look like.
  - o Muller mentioned that this is how many large manufacturers provide assistance to avoid any taxation of the monies as income to employees, i.e., payments are made directly to the institutions. Other employers prefer reimbursement, with some agreement with the employee of continued service. Still other employers loan funds to employees to help cover tuition and through payroll deductions allow for repayment of the loans, interest-free.
  
- When asked about assistantships while in the program, Dr. Lanahan reiterated that due to the intensity of the coursework and the compression of time for completion, the program is unable to offer an assistantship that typically requires 20 hours of work per week.
  
- Mrs. Robin Willis, Charleston Metro Chamber of Commerce (CMCC), was asked by Dr. Muller, whether the Chamber of Commerce has a career academy or a way to encourage high school students to enter the field of teaching, especially given our severe teacher shortages across the state and nation.
  - o The CMCC has career academies in healthcare, manufacturing, computer science, business, culinary, and engineering.
  - o There isn't a specific focus on K-12 teaching, but this has been suggested in earlier years. She will revisit the opportunity as we are out from under restrictions caused by the pandemic. The CMCC has been working hard to just keep its career academy concepts "alive" during the pandemic.
  
- Charleston County School District has an early college-high school program at Trident Technical College Palmer Campus, located in Downtown Charleston.
  - o Within the program, there is a cohort of students who are looking to become teachers and the focus of their courses is early childhood education.
  - o These students graduate from high school, with college credits, without delaying their graduation. The College of Charleston has an articulation agreement with Trident Tech to allow those with their Associates Degree to earn their Bachelor's Degree with little more than two additional years as a student at CofC.

- Students who finish with a B.A. or B.S. from CofC have been promised by Charleston County School District that upon graduation the school district would hire them.
  
- Dean Welch and Dr. Lanahan then shared briefly with the Advisory Board other programs it has to build the teacher workforce, including: 1) Teaching Fellows program, whereby students are on full scholarships; 2) “Call Me Mister” to encourage black male students to enter K-12 teaching, in which the College of Charleston currently has its largest class to date; 3) Female Minority Leadership, headed by faculty member Courtney Howard; and 4) the Special Education Certificate, offered as an “add on” to degrees.

With no further questions or discussion, the meeting ended at approximately 4:15 p.m. Advisory Board members will be contacted in the summer to schedule the next meeting likely to take place in September.

Respectfully submitted by Jonathan Solomon, Admin Assistant for the LGC

16 April 2021