

COWAG Education and STEAM Subcommittee Meeting Minutes October 2, 2019

The following individuals were in attendance: Tim Larson, Andrea Kovacs, Amanda Aronson, Nana Amos, Judith Slisz, John-Michael Parker, Mary Bidwell, Elizabeth Durgin, Emily Byrne, Ellyn Savard, Donna Maglio, Melanie Hobin, Melanie Tavares, Tracey Ariel, Terri Johnson, Taylor VanTwerp, Cathy Zeiner, Cyndi Zoldi, Carolyn Alessi, Corinne Roller, Lisa Lancor, Anne Morris, Laura Williams, Patrice Gans, Norm Sondheimer, Melissa Hickey, Lyn Caliendo, Eric Smith, Rhona Free, Janice Floyd, Noele Kidney and Cherie Phoenix-Sharpe.

Co-chair Timothy Larson convened the meeting at 1:09 p.m. and thanked everyone for attending and continuing to be involved in this important effort. He asked that those in attendance to introduce themselves and their organizations and then yielded to Cherie Phoenix-Sharpe who announced that Lt. Governor had recently accepted the position of Honorary Chair of the Connecticut Chapter of the Million Women Mentors organization and that all those interested in becoming either a mentor or a mentee should contact Laura Williams, who has accepted the role of working chair of the group. Million Women Mentors has partnered with Mentor.org.

Larson then explained the subcommittee's four subgroups – **Internship Development, Arts, STEAM Information HUB and Lt. Governor's Coding Challenge/Tech Champions for Girls.** He then said that the expectation is that everyone sign up for at least one subgroup. Larson explained that the goal of the meeting that day is to break into these groups so that individuals can brainstorm and determine suggested legislative policies as they relate to their specific subject area. Those present divided into the four subgroups and then reconvened at 2:30 p.m.

Co-chair Larson asked for a representative from each subgroup to give a recap of their discussion and to report back any determined policy objectives for the upcoming legislative session. He added that if groups are still fleshing out proposals, that the subcommittee will accept suggested initiatives through the following week.

Erin Choquette (DAS) reported out for the **Internship Development** subgroup – the group identified that their goal should be to improve internship programs in the State and that it should be geared to college students since students under the age of 18 add additional complications for employers. Best practices must be documented and these should provide a range of options for prospective intern experiences – including receiving pay, college credit or both. The group agreed that they must identify objectives and criteria for all involved and develop a google.doc site to include all of the information. Regarding access – a centralized job board would be vital. DECD and DOL were absent from the meeting but the group discussed partnering with these agencies to develop a website. A BI-INTERNSHIP was also mentioned to offer students to work in both public and private settings and develop a real world experience. A few noted barriers were lack of transportation and PAID vs NON-PAID internships. There are a few funding sources that might be utilized (for example, CT NEXT) to assist with expenses associated with internships and expanding UPASS was also suggested to give students better access to transportation. The group also suggested an idea of online internship programs. Externships were suggested as a solution to bridge the gap between a student's coursework and the internship program. The members also discussed mentorship – and it was suggested that in order to do so, the group should connect with some women coalitions that are already mentoring or partner with Million Women Mentors. There was agreement that internship programs should include a mentorship component. * Prior to the meeting, Megan Krom OPM Labor Specialist emailed the co-chair a link to the CT State Police Internship Program:

<https://portal.ct.gov/DESPP/Division-of-Emergency-Service-and-Public-Protection/Human-Resources/Co-Op-Internship-Program>.

Melissa Hickey (CSDE) reported out for the **STEAM Information Hub** – the group suggested creating a STEAM TEAM that has two arms – formalized, planned activities and then a social media-type arm – to include STEAM Technology events and programs sponsored by SDE, local Boards of Ed, non-profit organizations and private organizations that would be accessible to all stakeholders - teachers, schools, students, etc. The group also discussed information and curriculum sharing through a communication portal – that could turn a local board webmaster post into a centralized repository. Career opportunities would also be shared. The group also suggested developing a survey to poll the local schools on coding/STEM programs, coding clubs (girl specific), Resource needs – Dept. of Ed only has bandwidth as of today. Would need a “Communications Specialist” to accomplish.

Carolyn Alessi (Trinity Health) reported out for the **Lt. Governor’s Coding Challenge/Tech Champions** for Girls group. Members asked if there is funding available for this initiative. Surveys should be sent out to determine what coding programs/events are currently in place in towns – CAPS, CODE.org and Girls Who Code might have additional data. They’d like to target Grades 3-12 girls with tiered levels of challenges. It’s vital that teachers be involved so that they can reach students. Some barriers mentioned were transportation, parental support, access to technology outside of the school. All coding events should be put on a central calendar and coding curriculum opportunities offered to students, staff and families should be inventoried. Students and parents should be shown real-world career opportunities related to coding and tech fields.

Amanda Aronson (Aronson Consulting) reported out for the **Arts** group. Members identified alternative careers for those who within the Arts other than traditional roles – communications, advocacy, development, etc. Development of a network of art galleries was discussed. There should also be supports in place for individuals who want to work as artists – how do you work as an artist and effectively negotiate and a need for strengthening the infrastructure across the state to ensure equal access and quality programs regardless of municipal funding. What constitutes an art class? What is currently mandated by the state? What supports are currently in place within Connecticut’s communities for art education? Laura Williams asked the group to make sure that the written arts are included in their discussions. Lack of funding continues to be a significant barrier.

After all subgroups gave their reports, Larson reminded the subgroups to submit any legislative proposals – forms were given out to each group before they met.

Larson announced that the next subcommittee meeting will be held on Wednesday, December 2nd at 1:00 p.m. in Room 1D of the LOB. He then asked those present to look at their meeting agendas where future dates for 2020 meetings were listed: Wednesday, February 12th is a state holiday so Tuesday, February 11th was tentatively chosen as a replacement date. Larson said that the February date will be confirmed at the December meeting.

The Subcommittee meeting was concluded at 3:05 p.m.