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Coordination of Educational Efforts Report

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ARKANSAS COMMISSION FOR COORDINATION  
OF EDUCATIONAL EFFORTS  
2008 ANNUAL REPORT

The Commission for the Coordination of Educational Efforts was created by Act 109 of the Second Extraordinary Session of 2003. The Act required the appointment of members by the Governor, President Pro Tempore, Speaker of the House, the Presidents Council of Colleges and Universities, and by virtue of positions. Act 109 required the Commission to recommend policies related to the improvement of coordination among and between the levels of education from pre-kindergarten to the graduate level as well as:

- Recommend policies on concurrent enrollment of high school students in college courses.
- Make recommendations related to a common calendar for all public schools and institutions of higher education.
- Study the various delivery systems of distance learning and recommend ways to improve and make more efficient a delivery system for Arkansas.
- Recommend ways that the public schools, the Department of Education, the Department of Higher Education, and the institutions of higher education can improve working relationships in order to improve the effectiveness of teaching for the public schools.
- Recommend ways of improving the transfer of credit from institution to institution for the benefit of the student. This includes recommendations for improving the transfer from two-year to four-year institutions as well as the transfer among two-year institutions and four-year institutions.
- Make recommendations related to aligning the curriculum from kindergarten through the bachelor's level in colleges and universities.
- Recommend ways of improving the link between educational efforts and economic development for Arkansas.
- Recommend priorities for the funding of education.
- Review all current scholarship programs of the state and institutions of higher education and make recommendations for improving future scholarship programs.
- Make recommendations related to the future need for remediation of beginning college students.

- Make recommendations to improve science, technology, engineering, and mathematics education from kindergarten through the bachelor's level in higher education.
- Make recommendations to improve the use of educational technology.
- Recommend any other improvements in education at any level to benefit students and the state.

Act 1936 of 2005 amended Act 109 by adding the President of the Arkansas Science & Technology Authority and the Executive Chief Information Officer as members. Act 1936 also added duties 12 and 13 as listed above.

Act 751 of 2007 dissolved and transferred the duties of the Executive Chief Information Officer to the Department of Information Systems. Therefore, the Director of the Department of Information Systems replaced the Chief Information Officer as a member of the Commission.

The first meeting of the Arkansas Commission for Coordination of Educational Efforts was held on August 12, 2004 where Dr. Ken James, Director of the Department of Education, and Dr. Linda Beene, Director of the Department of Higher Education, presented an explanation of the commission, the reason for its creation and desired outcomes. Florine Milligan, Arkansas State University Trustee member, was elected Chair of the Commission at its November 2005 meeting.

The Commission has met quarterly since August 2004 to gather information. Presentations and information presented to the Commission include:

- Joan Lord, SREB Policy Director, presented information on college readiness and policies across SREB states;
- Information on the PLAN program;
- Information on Act 35 of 2005, Improving the Arkansas Comprehensive Assessment Program;
- Dr. Susanne Mitchell provided study results of P-16 councils;
- Dr. James provided information on Achieve, Inc., regarding high school reform efforts;
- Regular updates were provided on the National Governors Association Honor States Grant;
- Janine Riggs provided an update on the Honor States Grant;
- Tonya Russell presented information on the Arkansas Better Chance Program for Early Childhood Education;
- Dr. Karen Wheeler from the Department of Higher Education presented information on Act 502 of 2005, which requires institutional role and scope statements to reflect the changing economic development needs of the state;
- Dr. John Ahlen, from Arkansas Science and Technology Authority, as well as Dr. James Hendren and Jerry Adams presented information on the Accelerate Arkansas Project;
- Steve Sparks of the Department of Economic Development presented information on the WorkKeys program;

- Karen Ghidotti, Chair of the Distance Learning Coordinating Council created by Act 1425 of 2005, presented information on the New Curriculum Portal;
- Dr. Linda Beene presented information on Act 102 of the Second Extraordinary Session of 2003, which created the Concurrent Enrollment Panel;
- Dr. Karen Wheeler described Act 672 of 2005, the Arkansas Transfer System;
- Dr. John Ahlen presented information on the Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) Coalition;
- Tara Smith, director of financial aid at the Department of Higher Education, provided information about different scholarship programs;
- Beverly Williams from the Department of Education presented information about teacher recruitment and retention;
- Steve Sparks presented the commission with links between education and economic development; and
- Dr. Jim Purcell, director of the Department of Higher Education, and Dr. James described the findings of the Legislative Task Force on Higher Education Remediation, Retention, and Graduation Rates.

The recommendations of the Commission were provided to the Governor and Education Committee Chairs in the December 2007 Annual Report as required by Act 109 of the Second Extraordinary Session of 2003.

Florine Milligan was re-elected Chair of the Commission at its March 2008 meeting.

To specifically address the improvement of the link between economic development and education, the Commission focused recommendations on those subjects.

### **Education, Economic Development, and Entrepreneurship Committee-chaired by Amy Braswell**

#### **Findings:**

- To improve economic development in our state, three educational needs were identified:
  - We must improve instruction in our classrooms.
  - We must increase the rigor of our curriculum and courses.
  - We must prepare our children to compete in a global society.
- There is a lack of exposure to degree fields that meet the needs of Arkansas industries in our schools.
- There is a general lack of understanding of manufacturing today and in the future in Arkansas.

- There is a lack of knowledge among our students and stakeholders of the potential high wages available in Arkansas.
- The per capita income in Arkansas is \$8,000 behind the national average.
- We must compete more effectively with neighboring states for new business and new jobs.
- We must increase the number of workers with post-secondary training so they are ready for employment and are prepared for the new jobs of the future.
- Several states have developed policies to increase student access to and success in Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) courses. (IB involves a comprehensive curriculum that includes six academic areas: language, second language, individuals and societies, experimental sciences, mathematics and computer sciences, the arts, and community service.) This is a well-rounded curriculum that prepares students to compete and be successful in a global society.

Recommendations:

- Make Smart Core a pre-requisite for admission to a 4-year institution in the state of Arkansas.
- Place more emphasis on career readiness and soft skills in early grades to better prepare Arkansas students for the workplace.
- Develop a longitudinal tracking system for all Arkansas students from preschool through college.
- Improve math, science, and technology education in Arkansas by expanding STEM education as well as programs like EAST and Project Lead the Way.
- Recruit, train, hire, and retain qualified math and science instructors.
- Support the implementation of the IB program in more Arkansas schools.
- Support the IB programs that are already in place in our state. Legislation should be put in place ways to fund IB programs in the same manner that AP is funded.

- Create and implement a more effective and systemic approach to the success of AP/IB programs and concurrent credit.
- Expand instruction in low performing schools in our state and create a system of support.
- Utilize Milken educators as educational coaches and consultants around the state to model lessons, provide support for struggling schools, and improve instruction for all students.
- Study the innovative partnerships between careers, manufacturers, higher education, and P-12 schools that have been put in place around the country, as models for Arkansas. (For example, one such partnership is currently underway in Texarkana, Texas. The Texarkana Independent School District has created an innovative K-5 Math, Science, and Engineering School that feeds into an Engineering Pathway for grades 6-12. This feeds into the Texas A&M School of Engineering.)
- Support the recommendations of the Legislative Task Force on Higher Education Remediation, Retention, and Graduation Rates.