

Arkansas Public Higher Education  
Coordination of Educational Efforts Report

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**ARKANSAS COMMISSION FOR COORDINATION  
OF EDUCATIONAL EFFORTS  
2014 ANNUAL REPORT**

The Commission for the Coordination of Educational Efforts was created by Act 109 of the Second Extraordinary Session of 2003. 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, and included a specific list of topics for consideration. Subsequent legislation has adjusted the size and composition of the board but retained the initial purpose. The original topics and legislative history are provided for reference in Appendix A to this report.

For a decade the Commission for Coordination has met quarterly, listened to many distinguished speakers from government, education, and the private sector and annually provided a report with recommendations for change and attention. A partial list of past presentations is also provided for reference in Appendix A.

In the past ten years, many things have changed that affect education and jobs in Arkansas and the efforts that coordinate and link them. Some of these are executive acts, such as the STEM Works effort that promotes STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) education leading to a workforce empowered for the knowledge-based jobs of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. STEM Works includes UTeach programs at three universities that will improve the availability of teachers skilled in STEM disciplines and three project-based learning initiatives – Project Lead the Way, New Tech, EAST Core. The Arkansas Economic Development Commission has emphasized growth in skilled, higher paying jobs and the infrastructure to support technology based startups and increase venture capital.

There are also large efforts driven primarily by other state agencies, such as the advent of the Common Core Curriculum and Arkansas' role in developing the Next Generation Science Standards. These efforts affect the entire educational enterprise.

New organizations have also emerged focused on the vision of Arkansas in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Accelerate Arkansas focuses on the broad changes in education and the economy required to get the average income in Arkansas to equal the US average. The Arkansas STEM Coalition focuses on engaging the educational enterprise,

state agencies, businesses and citizens to remake Arkansas STEM policies, strategies and programs in order to expand the economy of Arkansas and produce higher paying jobs. There are programs to remediate, reduce the need for remediation, increase the success, extent and diversity of AP courses, and other programs for concurrent enrollment and distance education. Other programs encourage students to visit college campuses and employers, to gain information for planning their lives.

In 2014, the Commission heard from the Arkansas Department of Education and the Arkansas Department of Career Education on technology in education. A presentations on the Arkansas Regional Innovation Hub, the University of Arkansas at Little Rock's TechLaunch Program, and the Little Rock Startup Weekend. The Commission was regularly updated on the implementation of the Common Core State Standards.

For the May 2014 meeting, the Commission met at Don Roberts Elementary School. The facilitator and students in the EAST (Environmental and Spatial Technology) program spoke about and detailed some of their EAST projects. The group also heard how the school is using technology and making it more accessible for all students.

Recommendations of the Commission are:

- To encourage all school districts to incorporate project-based learning (PBL) instruction and activities as part of their curriculum planning and development. PBL is a student-centered teaching methodology that helps teachers motivate their students by engaging them in content inquiry and exploration that is relevant to the students' world and based on the curriculum standards adopted by the Arkansas State Board of Education. In addition, teachers can use PBL activities to formatively assess student mastery of academic content. Students engaged in PBL use 21st century skills to drive their choices in developing innovative solutions to compelling questions and dynamic problems. PBL students critique their work, and the work of others, in order to make informed revisions based on constructive feedback. Students, in successful PBL classrooms, also find meaning and take additional pride in their efforts and publicly presented solutions.
- To encourage increased state funding to provide for rapid expansion of project based learning initiatives, including EAST Core and Project Lead

the Way, as a means of better preparing all Arkansas students for the computing and technology intense world.

- To encourage two year college or technical institute that delivers technical training to align that training with established and accepted industry standards or certifications for that technical skill. Many of the training institutions teach a partial skill set that is not fully complete as per industry certifications or standards. If possible any student/employee that receives training should be certified in that skill as per the standard that industry uses as a benchmark for an acceptable level of skill proficiency. That may infer that this technical training be taught in modules that align with portions of the skill standard to enable these modules to be stackable to a point that not only the institution is able to award credit for the instruction but the industry standard can be met and the individual certified as having met that standard. When this occurs, industry will respect and accept the delivered training as 'good' and will begin to utilize these training institutions as a source for skilled employees.
- To encourage revision and expansion of computer science courses to prepare students for careers in this key area and to provide all students with adequate background for all 21<sup>st</sup> century careers rooted in technology. The need includes exposure to coding and an in-depth look at technology literacy required year by year as part of the K-12 curriculum.
- To encourage extension of project based learning into the area of entrepreneurship, supporting K-12 efforts such as Noble Impact, BizWorld and others, and preparing students for the increasingly important world of startups, a source of many future jobs. This preparation would also include improving the ability of students to define problems and seek answers.

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**Appendix A: Background and History**

The Commission for the Coordination of Educational Efforts was created by Act 109 of the Second Extraordinary Session of 2003 in response to a perceived need for coordinated efforts to address problems with the flow of students from K-12 educational institutions to institutions of higher education and ultimately to the workforce. One major example of an issue requiring coordinated attention was the high rate of remediation required in students entering the institutions of higher education.

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 first-time 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 concerning science and technology, 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, then Commissioner of the Department of Education, and Dr. Linda Beene, then 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, a position she diligently continued to fill through 2013.

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

- Jim Boardman, assistant director for research and technology at the Department of Education, addressed the tracking of students from kindergarten through college graduation;
- Dr. Jim Purcell informed the Commission about the changes in scholarships based on new legislation and the new lottery. He also spoke about President Obama's new American Graduation Initiative;
- Dr. Charity Smith, assistant commissioner for Academic Accountability at the Department of Education, presented information about data and tracking of students in kindergarten through high school graduation;
- Dr. Neal Gibson from the Arkansas Research Center and the Department of Education spoke to the Commission about student growth and data visualization. The Department of Education received a grant to develop a statewide longitudinal data system;

- Tonya Russell, director of the Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education at the Department of Human Services, reported activities by the Department of Human Services that encourage parental involvement, especially at the early childhood level;
- Dr. Jim Purcell presented information about Complete College America, a new initiative designed to identify and target college graduation goals. He also described the scholarships available and reported on the Department of Higher Education's process of awarding those scholarships;
- Jim Boardman presented the Commission with information about the data grant of \$9.8 million from the U.S. Department of Education to the Department of Education;
- Dr. Tom Kimbrell, commissioner of the Department of Education, updated the Commission on the Common Core State Standards for Readiness for College and Career. This is an effort of most states to adopt common standards in English, language arts, and mathematics education;
- William Walker, director of the Department of Career Education, spoke to the Commission on the duties of that department;
- Dr. Ed Franklin, executive director of the Arkansas Association of Two-Year Colleges, spoke to the Commission about the Center for Student Success;
- Shane Broadway, interim director of the Department of Higher Education, gave a legislative update;
- Dr. John Ahlen from the Arkansas Science and Technology Authority and Susan Harriman from the Department of Education updated the Commission on STEM education and the U-Teach program;
- Dr. Kimbrell spoke to the group about the Common Core standards and STEM works;
- Melinda Faubel from AT&T described some ways Arkansas businesses are promoting education through grants and other incentives;
- Dr. Bob Gunter from the Arkansas Department of Career Education updated the Commission on the activities of the department;
- Melissa Jacks from the educator licensure division at the Department of Education spoke about possible changes to teacher licensure regulations;
- Luke Gordy, executive director of the Arkansas for Education Reform Foundation, described the Foundation's work;
- Herschel Cleveland, a former state representative and sponsor of legislation creating the Commission, described the origin and history of the Commission; and
- Megan Witonski, assistant commissioner in the Division of Learning Services at the Arkansas Department of Education, spoke about the Common Core Standards being implemented;
- Stephen Addison, dean of UCA's College of Natural Science and Mathematics, described efforts to promote technology and computer science in education;
- Carman McBride, EAST Facilitator, and students, presented to the Commission various projects in the EAST program at Don Roberts Elementary School;
- Amanda Tucker, Instructional Technology Facilitator at Don Roberts Elementary School described ways the school was providing technology to the teachers and the students;
- Warwick Sabin, executive director of the Arkansas Regional Innovation Hub, spoke to the Commission about the organization;

- Jordan Carlisle, from the Little Rock Chamber of Commerce, described Little Rock Startup Weekend;
- Jeff Stinson, director of UALR TechLaunch, gave the Commissions details about TechLaunch's promotion of entrepreneurship; and
- Debbie Jones, assistant commissioner for Learning Services at the Arkansas Department of Education updated the Commission on the Common Core State Standards.

Each year the recommendations of the Commission were provided to the Governor, the Senate and House Committees on Education, the State Board of Education, the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board, the boards of trustees of public institutions of higher education, and superintendents of Arkansas public schools in the December Annual Report as required by Act 109 of the Second Extraordinary Session of 2003.

John Chamberlin, representing the private sector, was elected chair of the Commission at its February 2014 meeting.