

Arkansas Public Higher Education  
Coordination of Educational Efforts Report

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ARKANSAS COMMISSION FOR COORDINATION  
OF EDUCATIONAL EFFORTS  
2009 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 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, 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 was given about the PLAN program;
- Information was provided about Act 35 of 2005, Improving the Arkansas Comprehensive Assessment Program;
- Dr. Suzanne Mitchell from the Department of Higher Education, provided study results of P-16 councils;
- Dr. Ken James, commissioner of the Department of Education, provided information on Achieve, Inc., regarding high school reform efforts;
- Janine Riggs from the Department of Education, provided an update on the Honor States Grant;
- Tonya Russell from the Department of Human Services, 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 from 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 gave the Commission information about teacher recruitment and retention;
- Steve Sparks gave a presentation to the Commission about links between education and economic development;
- Dr. Jim Purcell, director of the Department of Higher Education, and Dr. Ken James, commissioner of the Department of Education, presented the findings of the Legislative Task Force on Higher Education Remediation, Retention, and Graduation Rates;
- Tara Smith, director of financial aid at the Department of Higher Education, addressed the Commission on recruitment and training of qualified math and science instructors;
- Dr. Suzanne Mitchell from the Department of Higher Education, described various professional development opportunities for math and science teachers;
- Dr. Karen Wheeler indicated the different tactics the Department of Higher Education is using to increase the number of college graduates in math and science areas;
- Ann Biggers, the gifted and talented administrator at the Department of Education, described the International Baccalaureate program in Arkansas and compared it with the Advanced Placement program;
- Jim Boardman, assistant director for research and technology at the Department of Education, addressed 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; and
- Dr. Charity Smith, assistant commissioner for Academic Accountability at the Department of Education, presented information about the data and tracking of students in kindergarten through high school graduation.

The recommendations of the Commission were provided to the Governor and Education Committee Chairs in the December 2008 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 May 2009 meeting.

#### Accomplishments in Education in 2009

- The Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board has approved all the scholarship changes recommended due to the lottery.

- American Graduation Initiative grants will be given by the federal government, some of which will encourage a K-16 data system. The Workforce Cabinet is supportive of a data system tracking a student kindergarten through the time he or she enters the workforce.
- The Arkansas Department of Education has been focused on math scores and the efforts to increase them, especially in older students.
- As part of the Governor's legislative package, a new law was passed providing financial incentives to school districts having fewer students opt out of Smart Core.
- A universal web application for financial aid for higher education will be created, which includes an application for the new lottery scholarship.
- As part of the Governor's legislative package, funding was increased for the College Preparatory Enrichment Program.
- Current scholarship programs were reviewed and revised as a result of the Governor's legislative package.

#### Recommendations

- Review and revise the career and technical education requirements.
- Review effectiveness of Smart Core incentives in light of new legislation.
- Require foreign language courses in the Smart Core curriculum.
- Encourage the Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education at the Department of Human Services to promote Smart Core in its public relations campaign to parents.
- Require universities via the ERZ initiative to work with secondary schools to create a five-year plan to reduce remediation.