

INTERIM JOINT COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Minutes of the Fourth Meeting of the 2023 Interim

September 19, 2023

Call to Order and Roll Call

The fourth meeting of the Interim Joint Committee on Education was held on September 19, 2023, at 11:00 a.m. in Room 154 of the Capitol Annex. Senator Stephen West, Chair, called the meeting to order, and the secretary called the roll.

Present were:

Members: Representative James Tipton Co-Chair; Senator Stephen West Co-Chair; Senators Shelley Funke Frommeyer, David P. Givens, Stephen Meredith, Gerald A. Neal, Reginald Thomas, Gex Williams, Mike Wilson, and Max Wise; Representatives Shane Baker, Jared Bauman, Tina Bojanowski, George Brown Jr., Emily Callaway, Jennifer Decker, Kevin Jackson, Candy Massaroni, Bobby McCool, Steve Rawlings, Josie Raymond, Steve Riley, Killian Timoney, Timmy Truett, Russell Webber, and Lisa Willner.

Guests: Monique Rice, Computer Science Initiatives Program Director, AdvanceKentucky; Codeye Woody, Director of State Government Affairs, Code.org; Sean Jackson, CS & IT Academy Program Manager, Kentucky Department of Education; Ben Foster, President, Kentucky Association of Scholars; Peter Wood, President, National Association of Scholars; David Randall, Research Director, National Association of Scholars; Pam Duncan, General Counsel, Kentucky Community and Technical College System; Hannah Rivera, Chief of Staff, Board & Government Liaison, Kentucky Community & Technical College System; Chris Powers, Higher Education Manager, Huron Consulting Group; Jennifer Ramey, Higher Education Consulting Principal, Huron Consulting Group; Weronika Wasilewski, Strategy and Operations Manager, Huron Consulting Group; and Wendy Fletcher, family nurse practitioner, Morehead.

LRC Staff: Yvette Perry, Lauren Busch, Joshua Collins, and Maurya Allen.

Approval of Minutes - August 1, 2023

Following the welcome of special guests by Senator Williams, Senator Meredith, and Co-Chair West, Senator Meredith made a motion to approve the minutes. The motion was seconded by Representative Timoney and approved by voice vote.

Coding Day at the Capitol

Codeye Woody, Director of State Government Affairs, Code.org, said Kentucky is not currently offering enough computer science (CS) courses and training enough certified graduates in information technology (IT) to meet the demand for computer scientists in many fields including medicine, manufacturing, and logistics. There have been significant strides in expanding CS education by allowing CS classes to be considered an elective science or mathematics course if approved at the district level. Code.org recommends that all high schools require at least one computer science class or make it a graduation requirement. Additionally, the state could

approve a preservice preparation program for teachers, and incentivize teacher preparation programs to offer computer science curriculum, to increase the number of teachers qualified to teach computer science.

Dr. Sean Jackson, CS & IT Academy Program Manager, Kentucky Department of Education (KDE), spoke to the efforts of the department through the implementation of Senate Bill 107 of the 2016 Regular Session to expand CS education. The legislation allowed KDE to create an academic discipline that encompasses the study of computers, algorithmic principles, and other information technology principles. Senate Bill 193 of the 2020 Regular Session, set the landscape to improve the number of teachers qualified to teach foundational computer science and KDE continues to remove systemic barriers for offering computer science classes in schools. They have also increased funding for all CS Advanced Placement (AP) exams and targeted industry certifications to allow access for more students to become credentialed. Looking forward, KDE wants to expand on a comprehensive K-12 state CS plan and prepare for industry skill demand, especially in cyber security, data science, artificial intelligence, and machine learning.

Monique Rice, Computer Science Initiatives Program Director, AdvanceKentucky, spoke about the AdvanceKentucky computer science initiatives which provide professional development in computer science for teachers. They partner with many groups including KDE, Code.org, CS for All, and KCTCS, to provide pathways for teachers to receive approval for computer science certification, regardless of what their original area of certification may have been. They focus on making computer science foundational by expanding CS instruction into grades K-8, and assist districts in developing a K-12 CS plan that aligns with the state K-12 CS plan.

Ms. Rice advocated for modernizing the CS pathways to address the ever-changing technological landscape. The existing pathways have not kept up with recent developments in data science, artificial intelligence, and machine learning. There need to be more area technology centers (ATCs) teaching CS and there should be incentives for those that do not currently offer CS pathways to do so and create more opportunities for students. Lastly, Ms. Rice illustrated the demographic disparities among those students entering CS courses, especially the lack of female participation in all STEM fields, including computer science.

In response to a question from Co-Chair Tipton, Cameron Wilson, President, Code.org, spoke about the implications of AI on the current landscape of computer science. AI and machine learning have been a foundational part of computer science for a while, but the current fervor around generative AI in commercial applications, such as with ChatGPT, will transform many industries. In terms of how it will impact education, it may lead to AI tutors for students, to help them learn not just coding, but other skills. It may also assist teachers in automating rote tasks or augmenting their expertise in the classroom.

Responding to a question from Representative Decker, Ms. Rice said there is an existing program available through Code.org Professional Learning. Teachers can sign up, participate in the five-day summer institute, and then complete the year-long course while teaching the subject. This allows teachers to then be credentialed to teach the CS foundational classes. If an educator

is teaching the course for which they are being trained, the time commitment is approximately one synchronous meeting a week with asynchronous coursework during the week.

In response to a question from Representative McCool, Dr. Jackson said that on the whole KDE has many systems in place to put additional CS courses into schools. It will take urgent support from the General Assembly to continue the budget appropriations to expand and modify pathways to answer the needs of industry today and into the future.

Responding to a question from Senator Thomas, Ms. Rice said that CS needs to be foundational and students should have a working knowledge of algorithms and how the internet works just as they understand photosynthesis. It needs to be part of elementary and K-8 education. Dr. Jackson said that it is part of the state plan to incorporate CS coursework into younger grades, and integration into the curriculum during the school day will help students connect CS to other subject areas.

In response to a question from Senator Williams, Dr. Jackson said getting his doctorate and later getting a CS certification was the best path for him, but he acknowledged it is not the best pathway for everyone. KDE has created pathways for individuals looking to change their career to get CS credentialing, sometimes without need for taking additional college education courses.

Senator Givens congratulated the students who came to the Capitol to present their coding projects and encouraged members to take time to visit with the students and discuss how policy makers could get involved, not only in creation of policy but also as champions of computer science and the students.

Association of Scholars

Ben Foster, President, Kentucky Association of Scholars, spoke as a private citizen regarding his experience as a university professor and the lack of diversity of philosophy among university staff and donors. He illustrated how this has an impact on the experience of students through anecdotal evidence of student concerns regarding statements in class syllabi. He also presented examples of anecdotal evidence of professors speaking violently regarding opposing views and how that leads to a perception of the university being equally intolerant and violent.

While professors have a right to free speech and freedom of expression, statements such as he cited may serve to chill speech among students and other faculty. He also presented concerns with official statements from public universities that appear to be political when addressing current events such as the Black Lives Matter movement and the overturning of *Roe v. Wade*. He said this illustrates a political bias in universities and requires legislative action.

David Randall, Research Director, National Association of Scholars, briefly said there are several model bills recommended by the National Association of Scholars, specifically those recently adopted in Ohio, which would be useful to reform postsecondary education institutions to encourage neutrality and diversity of opinion. Peter Wood, President, National Association of Scholars, said the organization has sought to steer higher education onto a path that fosters intellectual freedom and prepares citizens for active participation in the nation. He feels that these bills should be noncontroversial, but frequently are not seen that way. Kentucky would

benefit from autonomous centers of freedom on college campuses, as demonstrated in Arizona, Florida, Ohio, Texas, and Tennessee. These create protected islands for free expression without fear of retaliation. Young people need to be trained in how to speak up for their values as much as they learn how to code. The culture needs to change beginning with the governance structures of public universities.

In response to a question from Representative Bojanowski, Mr. Foster said there are individuals who feel marginalized currently and he feels that the model legislation would help those individuals.

Responding to a question from Representative Willner, Mr. Wood said he believes that universities should provide insurance so that staff and students can access mental health services in the private sector, but that administrative staff should not provide mental health services. He said the university is not the appropriate location to provide mental health services and that there needs to be further discussion about why there is such a dramatic increase in mental disturbances among young people today.

Senator Thomas said he would be opposed to taking the direction of education in Texas and Florida where the teaching of historical events appears to have been distorted to the point of not reflecting the true harm done to marginalized populations in the past.

Report of the Huron Consulting Group

Hannah Rivera, Chief of Staff, Board & Government Liaison, Kentucky Community & Technical College System, spoke briefly of the KCTCS search for a new president. The search committee has selected finalists for consideration and there is hope for a selection to be announced soon. She then transitioned to the Huron Consulting Group study which had several objectives including examining the feasibility of a four-year KCTCS college in eastern Kentucky and what pathway changes may be necessary for the whole system.

Pam Duncan, General Counsel, Kentucky Community and Technical College System, said the resource optimization committee awarded the contract for this review to the Huron Consulting Group following an RFP process and the goal was to gather the necessary data to develop a plan to continue to provide quality education to students and supportive environments for employees. Jennifer Ramey, Higher Education Consulting Principal, Huron Consulting Group, said they performed interviews and surveys of staff and students all over the state and reviewed internal documents to get a good foundation for making recommendations. Optimization was a core principle for the study and Huron focused on the ways KCTCS could better and more efficiently educate students.

Weronika Wasilewski, Strategy and Operations Manager, Huron Consulting Group, said the focus of the final phase of work was assessment of the data that had been collected, identification of nearly 50 optimization opportunities, and a prioritization of the opportunities ranked by the Board of Regents to move forward with in the next year. KCTCS is now in the design and implementation phase with those projects with further support and consultation from Huron.

Chris Powers, Higher Education Manager, Huron Consulting Group, presented the 47 optimization opportunities broken down by different work streams including space utilization, academic programming, and financial and organizational. He highlighted the top priority areas of space utilization, capital construction projects, academic programming, organization structure, strategic sourcing, data strategies, and creation of a project management office. Huron has been helping with some elements, based on their expertise, while KCTCS pursues others. He also gave an overview of the timeline for the project and where Huron will gradually be reducing their involvement as KCTCS takes over projects.

Wendy Fletcher, family nurse practitioner, Morehead, spoke regarding her position as a parent, tax payer, and a former member of the KCTCS Board of Regents. She attended meetings regarding the RFP and resource optimization committee to select a vendor to do this necessary work. Huron Consulting Group was asked to find where KCTCS is failing, where there are opportunities to improve, and benchmark the system to the best systems in the nation. She spoke to how successful this project has been and how it is benefiting the students. She thanked the board, staff, and others who answered questions and fought to make KCTCS better. She said the legislature may need to step in to assist in certain areas, but the Huron report will provide the necessary data to make the best decisions.

In response to a question from Representative Raymond, Mr. Powers said the marginalization of students of color was not part of the scope of their work so he could not comment on how it impacted the system.

In response to a question from Senator Thomas, Mr. Powers said the full report includes more than could be presented today. There was a market position report that showed how KCTCS is positioned and highlights areas of study that are currently not offered by KCTCS but could be offered in the future. Ms. Duncan said the system is still laboring under programs and processes that are ten or more years old, and this will allow the university to shed outdated processes in order to move forward and improve recruitment and academic programming. Reallocation of resources to programs that are of greater benefit to students is a significant part of the next steps.

Senator Givens said he was concerned that the system is doing a lot of reviewing and not a lot of implementing. Ms. Rivera said the Huron Consulting Group was brought in to collect data and assess that data to make recommendations. It will be up to the new president and the Board of Regents to make the decisions about implementation and execution. That is the current phase of the project and leadership will be tasked with moving forward. Senator Givens said the members are anxious to know the timelines for implementation.

Responding to a question from Co-Chair West, Ms. Rivera said the point person for implementation will be the system president, when they are hired, and they will report to the Board of Trustees.

Senator Funke Frommeyer said she is also anxious to know what the plan is moving forward and that there needs to be real change to make KCTCS meaningful, especially in eastern Kentucky.

Co-Chair Tipton said KCTCS plays a vital role in meeting the needs of Kentucky's workforce, and if the Board and president do not choose to implement changes, the General Assembly will involve themselves in making changes. Ms. Ramey said they had not looked at consolidation in the initial phase of the study, but evaluation of the possibility will be part of the next phase, as will the evaluation of academic programs and where there are gaps. The management office will provide accountability to give accurate and timely reporting on implementation.

Adjournment

With no further business to come before the committee, the meeting adjourned at 1:07 p.m. The next meeting of the committee will be October 17, 2023 at 11:00 a.m.