

LEGISLATIVE OVERSIGHT & INVESTIGATIONS COMMITTEE

Minutes of the 4th Meeting of the 2021 Interim

September 16, 2021

Call to Order and Roll Call

The 4th meeting of the Legislative Oversight and Investigations Committee was held on Thursday, September 16, 2021, at 1:00 PM, in Room 131 of the Capitol Annex. Senator Danny Carroll, Chair, called the meeting to order, and the secretary called the roll.

Present were:

Members: Senator Danny Carroll, Co-Chair; Representative Jason Nemes, Co-Chair; Senators Jason Howell, Morgan McGarvey, Michael J. Nemes, Wil Schroder, Brandon J. Storm, Reginald Thomas, and Max Wise; Representatives Lynn Bechler, Ken Fleming, Angie Hatton, Joni L. Jenkins, Steve Riley, and Scott Sharp.

Guests: Dr. Paul Czarapata, President, Kentucky Community and Technical College System; Dr. Kris Williams, Chancellor, Kentucky Community and Technical College System.

LRC Staff: Gerald W. Hoppmann, Committee Staff Administrator; Committee Analysts William Spears, Joel Thomas, Chris Hall, Jeremy Skinner, Shane Stevens, Van Knowles, Jacob Blevins; and Ashley Taylor, Committee Assistant.

Minutes for August 12th, 2021

Upon motion by Senator Nemes and second by Representative Riley, the minutes for the August 12th, 2021, meeting were approved without objection.

Staff Update: *Nonacademic Barriers Facing Kentucky Community and Technical College Students*

Legislative Oversight staff members Chris Hall and Shane Stevens provided a summary of Nonacademic Barriers Facing Kentucky Community and Technical College Students, Research Report No. 462, October 4, 2019. Staff also summarized a May 7, 2021, update to the report's recommendations, provided by the Kentucky Community and Technical College System (KCTCS).

The presentation slides are available on the Legislative Oversight and Investigations Committee webpage.

Dr. Paul Czarapata and Dr. Kris Williams presented a PowerPoint on how KCTCS is addressing nonacademic barriers related to student success. Dr. Czarapata said that KCTCS has 16 independently accredited colleges with over 70 locations across the state, providing access for students who wish to stay close to home. KCTCS is an open access system that serves over 100,000 students annually.

Dr. Czarapata stated that KCTCS has experienced a decrease in enrollment during the pandemic, which might be due to some of the differences between its students and four-year college students. Nearly half of its students are over the age of 25 and a third have dependents. These students are more adversely affected by pandemic-related issues such as daycare closures than their four-year university counterparts.

Dr. Czarapata identified disengagement as a nonacademic barrier. He explained that it can be difficult for community college students to build connections when there are no residence halls, food services, or sports like at universities. It is particularly difficult for online students. He said that it is difficult for faculty to get students to interact and feel engaged.

In response to the first recommendation from the committee's 2019 report, Dr. Czarapata said that KCTCS plans to leverage existing technology to collect nonacademic barriers from students as part of the advising and intake process, as opposed to collecting the information during registration. Collecting this type of information from students during the registration process can be viewed as intrusive.

In response to the second recommendation from the committee's 2018 report, Dr. Czarapata stated that KCTCS is using Starfish to develop and collect accurate measures of nonacademic program success. Starfish is a software program already used across all 16 colleges, which also allows students and staff to communicate in real time.

In response to the third recommendation from the committee's 2018 report, Dr. Czarapata explained that Starfish allows faculty to provide positive feedback or offer additional support to students in order to address nonacademic barriers. Starfish can also help students navigate the college environment by providing checklists and scheduling appointments for students, such as advising, counseling, or mental health issues. Such interaction has resulted in significant benefits in all levels of student success, according to Dr. Czarapata.

Dr. Czarapata discussed various partnerships with the community to provide services to students to provide food, mental health counseling, transportation assistance, child care, and financial aid and literacy. He also discussed programs designed for an older

student base, such as a 24-hour welding program at the Ashland campus. Other examples include Sky Flex, which is an interactive hybrid online/in-person program teaching students advanced manufacturing skills.

Dr. Czarapata also discussed other student support related to flexible class schedules, as well as offering students laptops and mobile Wi-Fi hotspots during the pandemic, which also benefitted students who could not leave their homes.

Dr. Czarapata concluded his presentation by stating that he believes KCTCS is the solution to Kentucky's workforce shortage by awarding 98 percent of short-term certificates in Kentucky and training a high percentage of Kentucky's skilled workers, including nurses and others in the health care field. Nearly 80 percent of the system's credentials are in Kentucky's top five industry sectors. He also stated that that funding is needed to continue providing these types of services and support, including capital projects. He thanked the committee for the opportunity to present information about KCTCS.

The presentation slides are available on the Legislative Oversight and Investigations Committee webpage.

In response to a question from Senator Carroll, Dr. Czarapata stated that the enrollment at KCTCS is down. He said that enrollment numbers tend to match the workforce participation rate, which is currently fairly low.

Dr. Williams explained that current enrollment is down around 2 percent compared to last fall. The decrease could be due to child care uncertainty, unemployment, or other reasons. She stated that the head count is a little odd due to the different types of enrollment. For example, dual enrollment is doing well while workforce classes—where the college partners with employers—are down. Enrollment for credential-seeking students is down at most colleges, although Gateway and a few of the other colleges have flat or have slightly increased numbers. Many are seeing severe drops in the enrollment of credential-seeking students.

In response to a question from Senator Carroll, Dr. Williams explained that Scholar Houses are Section 8 housing that are available onsite to single parents who are enrolled full time with young children. Scholar Houses are available at a few KCTCS campuses, including West Kentucky Community and Technical College. She noted that the Scholar House model is difficult to replicate due to the Kentucky Housing Authority not always having available Section 8 vouchers that can be attached to a facility. She stated that it is a wonderful and successful model that KCTCS is working to increase.

Dr. Williams said that KCTCS also has some Head Start partnerships. For example, the Henderson campus has two Head Start classrooms on campus where toddlers and infants can attend for full or half days. Some colleges have child care facilities, however,

given liability issues relating to operating a child care facility, KCTCS tries to partner with organizations such as the Kentucky Housing Authority and Head Start. Dr. Williams added that KCTCS has a very strong early childhood program that provides student internships.

Senator Carroll suggested that the community colleges contact private providers to provide help with child care. Dr. Williams stated that community colleges are able to make partnerships with community organizations such as the United Way and other housing authorities.

In response to a question from Representative Fleming, Dr. Czarapata explained that KCTCS had some child care partnerships with the private sector before the pandemic. However, the pandemic reduced the maximum number of children allowed per daycare worker, so these partnerships are not as prevalent as they once were. Dr. Czarapata said that Representative Fleming's suggestion about partnering with private sector businesses with onsite child care facilities was a great point and that he would bring it up during his ongoing college tour, which includes meeting with business and industry partners.

Representative Fleming stated that child care seems to be a common theme not only for individuals going back to school, but also for individuals going back to work. He said it seems like the state could make an effort to support individuals going back to work by supporting child care facilities. He requested a summary of how KCTCS utilizes the private sector in this area.

Dr. Williams explained that if an employer partnering with KCTCS in its apprenticeships or work-and-learn experiences provides child care to its employees, then the KCTCS student in the program will have access to the child care provided by the employer. KCTCS is working with the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce on child care provider initiatives or recommendations. Child care is a profession that does not pay well, so it can be hard to bring child care workers into the field. She feels that there are opportunities to think about how to subsidize child care.

Dr. Williams discussed a program offered at Hazard Community and Technical College called "Tuesday Night Live" where a meal is offered every Tuesday night to students and their children. The parents then go to class while the early childhood development students take care of the kids and work with them and their homework. While this program was halted during the pandemic, it was a very successful family-oriented learning experience that she hopes will be duplicated across more campuses.

In response to a question from Representative Fleming about mental health as a barrier, Dr. Czarapata explained that the Counsel on Postsecondary Education (CPE) has several initiatives for addressing student mental health, including Mental Health First Aid, Mental Health 101, and access to online therapy. Students who are on campus can speak with advisors who can direct them to assistance for mental health. Students can receive

support through online chats, phone calls, or, if necessary, by referral to local mental health facilities. Dr. Czarapata noted that the COVID-19 pandemic compounded the pressures in the lives of students, faculty, and staff. He said that KCTCS will continue these mental health programs even after the funding from CPE runs out because of their level of importance.

Representative Fleming thanked Dr. Czarapata and encouraged KCTCS to partner with facilities that offer mental health services throughout the state, and he also encouraged KCTCS to look into the telehealth services option.

Senator Carroll stated that, in an effort to increase the number of child care workers, federal funds are available so that anyone wanting to get a certification or a degree can essentially do so for free. He stated that owning and operating a child care facility is not a profitable business. He said that the entire structure of child care in the Commonwealth needs to change and that the legislature is going to have to be heavily involved. He said that child care facilities need to be tied into education and dollars need to be allocated to help these centers grow and improve.

Senator Nemes stated that Dr. Aaron Thompson from CPE is doing a fantastic job making students aware of what the degree they are attaining is actually worth. He asked KCTCS to provide a list of short-term certificates and the expected salary for each type of certificate. He also requested KCTCS provide a list of companies with registered apprenticeships that it is working with so that he can possibly assist in getting more companies on that list.

Senator Carroll explained that daycare facilities are receiving quarterly payments that will last until 2024. These payments are based on capacity as well as how much staff is paid. The higher staff salaries are, the more funding employers receive. He expressed concern for daycare facilities when this money goes away in 2024 because each child care center will be stuck paying at that level and it will be difficult for them to survive at that point.

Representative Jenkins stated that she understands the issues discussed because she worked with at-risk students at Jefferson Community and Technical College for 10 years. Noting the trend of community colleges hiring adjunct instructors as a result of budget issues, she asked for specific areas that would benefit from funding in the next state budget. Dr. Czarapata said that KCTCS is working on a document that will include specifics about funding needs and the anticipated uses of funding received. KCTCS will send this document to the committee when it is completed.

Regarding the prevalence of adjunct instructors, Dr. Czarapata stated that KCTCS has difficulty retaining full-time faculty as KCTCS is frequently outbid by universities and the private industry. In terms of budgetary needs, he said that, in light of flat

enrollment and the need for wraparound services, there are many areas that could use investments. He specifically noted the importance of investing in faculty.

Dr. Williams agreed about investing in faculty, specifically citing staffing shortages in KCTCS nursing programs. For example, she noted a need for investments in new equipment, such as simulators in the Allied Health program and the commercial driver license training centers. There is also a need to fund training and professional development for faculty. She also cited a need for funding wraparound services and overhead related to the apprenticeship program, in which 65 companies and 500 apprentices participate. Dr. Williams stated that KCTCS will send a list of participants in the apprenticeship program to the committee.

In reference to Senator Nemes' earlier question about the value of certificates, Dr. Williams said that she will send a recently released CPE report that lists the value of some of the certificates offered by KCTCS.

Representative Jenkins stated the community colleges play an important role in providing the state with trained employees as it rebounds from the pandemic.

Senator Carroll asked about the nursing programs available at KCTCS and the number of seats available in the nursing programs. Dr. Williams stated that all 16 KCTCS colleges have nursing programs and, since each campus program is managed separately, there are 23 nursing programs.

The Kentucky Board of Nursing caps the number of nursing seats that can be filled at any given time based on national accreditation standards such as classroom ratios and clinical seats. The current cap is 1,250 students. Last year, KCTCS graduated 905 students who were then ready to take the National Council Examination for Registered Nurses (NCLEX), which nursing students have to pass to practice professionally. Dr. Williams said that while the KCTCS nursing program is a 2-year associate's degree program, its graduates take the same NCLEX test as bachelor's degree program nurses. If a hospital needs a bachelor's degree nurse, KCTCS has partnerships with the state's regional and research universities so that a nurse with an associate's degree from KCTCS can obtain a bachelor's degree.

Dr. Williams credited the Education and Workforce Development Cabinet for its work in addressing the nursing crisis. One potential barrier is the cap in nursing seats, which could be addressed by the addition of more faculty and clinical sites.

With regard to the availability of nursing program seats at KCTCS colleges, Dr. Williams said that the availability of nursing program seats at KCTCS varies depending on the school. Some colleges have more applicants than there are seats, while others, such as Madisonville, have more seats than candidates. Dr. Williams stated that retention is an issue in the nursing program. She said the nursing program is difficult and time-

consuming, while the academic barriers discussed during the meeting, such as child care, can lead to retention issues. Wraparound services such as success coaches and tutors could be useful. The Kentucky Chamber's talent pipeline management process is working with hospitals and providers to aid in the recruitment and retention of nursing students.

Senator Carroll requested that KCTCS provide the committee with information related to the 23 nursing programs at KCTCS including trends in enrollment, graduation rates, retention, cap numbers, and student waiting lists. He also requested KCTCS to identify the resources needed to increase student numbers in the areas of staffing, expanding facilities, and meeting accreditation standards. Senator Carrol stated that nursing is an issue for further discussion.

In response to a question from Representative Bechler, Dr. Williams said that the Kentucky Board of Nursing sets the caps on the number of available nursing seats. Colleges and universities have the authority to increase their specific cap by a certain number without going before the board. Any increase above that requires the college or university to submit a proposal to the board showing that there are sufficient faculty, clinical sites, and resources available to increase the cap and meet the needs to those students.

In response to a follow-up from Representative Bechler, Dr. Williams stated that any college wanting to increase their cap must go before the education committee of the Kentucky Board of Nursing. The committee reviews the cap numbers along with retention and graduation data from the program site. The committee then takes the request to the full board.

Dr. Williams said that the leaders of the nursing programs at KCTCS work with the education committee and Kentucky Board of Nursing to ensure that they understand the differences between 2-year and 4-year nursing programs. The barriers faced by KCTCS students are different from those faced by 4-year program students, so KCTCS may not always have retention numbers that are deemed appropriate by the board.

Representative Bechler stated that he hopes the board is receptive to requests from the 2-year colleges in light of the reported nursing shortages. In response to Representative Bechler's question about the 900 nursing student graduates last year, Dr. Williams said that those students are called associate degree nurses who are eligible to sit for the NCLEX and become registered nurses. KCTCS also has a program for licensed practical nurses (LPNs), who are state-registered nursing aides who work in long-term care facilities. The LPN registry is often the first step on a nursing pathway. Although the registry includes a lot of students, some of those students are not going to work in a long-term care facility as they are preparing for nursing school.

In response to a question from Representative Bechler, Dr. Williams confirmed that the 905 graduates discussed earlier are associate degree nurses who are eligible to become registered when they pass the NCLEX. Dr. Williams added that KCTCS nursing programs have high pass rates for the NCLEX. In response to Representative Bechler's request for details about the NCLEX pass rates, Dr. Williams stated that she did not know the success rate by college or the overall average, but that she will provide that information to the committee.

In response to a question from Representative Bechler about the number of KCTCS students with 2-year degrees who go on to get a 4-year degree, Dr. Czarapata said that she will get that information to the committee. Representative Bechler also requested total nursing program graduate numbers.

Senator Carroll and Dr. Williams briefly discussed whether nursing program students are required to obtain certified nursing assistant certifications.

Senator Thomas asked how KCTCS plans to comply with Section 6 of Senate Bill 2 from the 2021 Special Session, which mandated that colleges and universities produce public service announcements and develop a public awareness campaign related to the effects of COVID-19 and the benefits of receiving a COVID-19 vaccination. Dr. Czarapata stated that while there have been initial discussions about it, an effective systemwide marketing campaign may be limited by a lack of funds. He noted that KCTCS and the state universities will participate in a CPE-coordinated program about the value of an education. He anticipates that this program will touch on the pandemic. He said that while some areas in the state, such as Lexington, have good vaccination rates, there are other pockets of the state where even KCTCS faculty and staff are hesitant to get vaccinated.

Regarding the nursing issue, Senator Thomas recommended that the KCTCS system office emulate the nursing program at Bluegrass Community and Technical College in Lexington.

Senator Carroll pointed out that the Kentucky Board of Nursing will need to be involved going forward in any discussion about the nursing crisis, specifically as it relates to caps. Accreditation requirements and investments in nursing faculty and facilities will also have to be considered. In response to Senator Carroll's questions about nursing program schedules, Dr. Williams said that schedules vary across KCTCS's 23 nursing programs. However, most of the nursing programs are day programs with a few evening classes offered. KCTCS is trying to move some of the didactic and lecture classes online while keeping clinical classes in-person. Dr. Williams noted that the nursing programs are 10-month programs, which allows the nursing faculty time to work in hospitals. This enables faculty an opportunity to maintain their licenses and make additional money. Although more and more men are entering the nursing field, the nursing program

primarily consists of females who often benefit from having the summer off from a full course load as it coincides with children being out of school.

In response to a question from Senator Carroll, Dr. Williams said that the medical programs offered by KCTCS colleges are not uniform throughout the state. The programs offered at individual colleges are based on the number of job openings in the community each college serves. Dr. Williams said that they will send a list of the medical programs offered at each KCTCS college.

Representative Fleming requested an inventory of any aviation-related programs offered by KCTCS, in particular programs that have ties with local high schools.

In response to a question from Senator Carroll, Dr. Czarapata said that KCTCS does have a standardized process for when a student wishes to withdraw from school. While the school does intervene in an attempt to keep a student from withdrawing, there are instances where the student has no other option but to withdraw.

Senator Carroll closed by agreeing with Representative Jenkins' earlier comment that KCTCS is crucial to the success of the Commonwealth, and its role will increase as more industry comes to the state. He complemented KCTCS's ability to adapt to the needs of the local areas served by the individual colleges.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:20 p.m.