

# State Workforce Investment Board Lifelong Learning Committee

**January 11, 2012  
State Capitol, Room 137**

**Council Members Present:** Dave Crum - Chair, Senator Edward Buttrey, Hank Hudson, Representative Jean Price, John Cech, Margaret Bowles, Linda Guzik, Thomas McKenna, Vicki Judd

**Council Members Absent:** Senator Kim Gillan, Kirk Hammerquist, Michael DesRosier

**Guests:** Kathy Wilkins, Trevor Laboski, Karen Allen, Drea Brown

**Staff:** Leisa Smith and Adrienne Piccono

## **I. Welcome and Introduction**

Chair Crum called the meeting to order and requested the Committee member introduce themselves. Chair Crum made opening comments to emphasize the goal and charge to move economic development forward and better use shrinking dollars. Ms. Piccono conducted roll call. A quorum was present. Ms. Piccono conducted housekeeping and noted that the meeting was going to be recorded for the accuracy of the minutes. Chair Crum stated that the meeting will be conducted under Robert's Rules of Order.

The Agenda was approved by consensus. Chair Crum voiced concerns regarding timely approval of minutes and requested staff to look into options for committee member's review of draft minutes while allowing public comment. The Committee recommended staff complete draft minutes within a two week time frame, and email preliminary minutes to committee members for their comments. Staff reminded the committee that online voting is not allowable as it does not allow for public comment and the minutes would need to be later approved at the Committee level.

Thomas McKenna motioned to approve February 10, 2010 minutes, with a second from Linda Guzik. Thomas McKenna motioned to approve the May 5, 2010 minutes with a second from Vicki Judd, and Vicki Judd motioned to approve the September 22, 2010 minutes with a second from Linda Guzik. Motions carried for all minutes.

## **II. Historical Overview**

Leisa Smith, SWIB Director, gave a brief historical background of the SWIB's interests and activities regarding innovative educational models and pilots occurring nationally and within the State. She stated that the SWIB has long been interested and recognized the importance of cross-agency partnerships in workforce development projects such as the Montana Big Sky Pathways project, which started out as a secondary education approach. A WIA incentive grant allowed for the development of a tool called Personalized Employment Plan (PEP Talk) which is currently used by many partners as a career pathway planning tool. The SWIB has also offered supports to Apprenticeship Employment & Training as they undergo federal modernization mandates and face a scarce workforce due to aging and retirements. Ms. Smith informed new Committee members that the SWIB has brought in national workforce corporations to educate and direct SWIB's Strategic Planning resulting in the formation of the Lifelong Learning and Sector Strategy Committee's. Numerous grants, partnership opportunities and initiatives have come to the State to help further advance these approaches. The most recent example is the Adult Career

Pathway Technical Assistance Award, which helps with statewide strategic approaches, efficiencies, and effectiveness. These models, grants etc. require the engagement and the voice of business and industry. Ms. Smith stressed that current grant language coming from the federal level highlights the importance of pathway models for short term training for adults in need of upgrading skills and returning to the workforce as quickly as possible. The importance of providing certificates and credentials that are portable, stackable, and transferable is also being emphasized. Adult Basic Education has also come to be considered a very important player in the career pathways process especially as the State works to improve Montana's dropout rates and decrease the numbers of those without the basic high school credential. Montana's aging population and impacts to the workforce pipeline additional areas of concern for Montana's workforce development.

Chair Crum inquired into the status of WIA funding. Ms Smith stated it is still unknown at this time however, the State has received reductions and at present the Governor's Set-Aside funding is not available. Ms Smith said that the State had been reviewing the recent release of a US DOL grant solicitation for the Workforce Innovation Grants and deferred to Dave Morey, Bureau Chief for the Dept of Labor, to further explain the details of the grant and any funding updates. Mr. Morey stated that there have been a number divergent bills around reauthorization involving funding cuts and program consolidations but today's message from congressional staff indicate there is now strong agreements on the language for reauthorization and that the hope is that funding will be retained at the current level. Most likely there will be some structural changes. Additionally, the US Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration (ETA) have put forth a solicitation for a Workforce Innovation Grant. The total amount is for \$98 million dollars. ETA anticipates funding 20 grants across the country. To review the grant solicitation, refer to the SWIB Web at [www.swib.mt.gov](http://www.swib.mt.gov) under What's Happening or [http://www.doleta.gov/workforce\\_innovation/](http://www.doleta.gov/workforce_innovation/) .....

### **III. College!Now**

John Cech, Deputy Commissioner of Two-Year and Community Colleges, Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education (OCHE) presented an overview and update on the College!Now Initiative approved by the Board of Regents and led by the Montana University System. The primary goals of the Initiative are to make two-year higher education more accessible, better coordinated, better understood and, as a result, better utilized statewide. Mr. Cech detailed the reasons for the transformation, explained the primary strategies and the shared outcomes from recent listening sessions, retreats, and summits around the State to strategize ways to rebrand and finalize their comprehensive mission expansion plan. The College!Now PowerPoint can be found on the SWIB website ([www.swib.mt.gov](http://www.swib.mt.gov)) under archived meetings, along with the Board of Regents and OCHE websites.

Mr. Cech concluded by announcing that this spring, 12 two-year colleges in the State will be conducting Adult Learning Assessments in partnership with Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL). The assessment surveys will involve a cross section of faculty and staff and will evaluate a wide range of policies, activities and practices for adult students. In addition, an Adult Learning Inventory will be conducted reaching out to students twenty five and older to assess how well higher education is doing at serving the adult student. CAEL will provide the comparison results. This process will create a unique opportunity for dialogue regarding how two-year education is doing at serving adult learners. The results will provide important information for strategic and system planning for improvement of work and programming. The Committee inquired into sustainability of the initiatives once funding ends. Mr. Cech stated that leveraging other existing grants and partnerships that have shared objectives, especially with Carl Perkins funding is one way this is being addressed. A goal is to find better parallels and cross-walks, identify efficiencies and find areas for reinvestment. Work is also being done with the Regents and campuses regarding budgeting for continued growth. Additional Committee questions inquired into the embedded COT's and concerns the perceptions are that they are feeder schools for four-year colleges and concerns regarding duplication and competition. Mr. Cech stated that the higher education presidents, deans,

chancellors etc. are very supportive of the College!Now Initiative and recognize how critical it is to increase access, efficiencies and raise attainment rates in order to be competitive at both a state and national level.

#### **IV. Career Pathways & Rigorous Programs of Study**

Kathy Wilkins, OCHE Grant Manager for Carl Perkins Grants, provided an overview of the Montana Career Clusters Big Sky Pathways and the Rigorous Programs of Study. These endeavors are joint programs with OPI and OCHE. The framework was established by U.S. Department of Education Office of Vocational & Adult Education (US DOE OVAE) to promote and improve state and local development and implementation of career and technical education (CTE) programs of study (POS) that link secondary and postsecondary education, combine academic and career and technical education in a structured sequence of courses that progress from broad foundation skills to more occupationally specific courses. This is the vision of the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 and beyond. Ms Wilkins outlined what they are, why they are important, challenges, opportunities, status report, components, phases of implementation, progress, benefits to students and business, ways to get involved and partnerships that have occurred with other agencies such as Dept of Labor, Health and Human Services, OPI and OCHE. More information can be found on the SWIB and [Big Sky Pathways Website](#).

There is hope to extend the program to Job Corp and Apprenticeships Employment and Training. Committee comments also noted that the Personal Employment Plan (PEP Talk) tool is also being built upon the Big Sky Pathways.

Chair Crum asked Mr. Cech if there was any action being requested on behalf of any the two programs presented. Mr. Cech stated a formal affirmation of the goals of College!Now would be helpful. Senator Buttrey presented a motion to endorse or support College!Now Initiative and Goals and pass on to the SWIB for their support. Ms Judd provided a second. Sen. Buttrey modified the motion to also include Committee support for the Career Clusters and Big Sky Pathways to be taken to the SWIB for their support. Ms Judd provided a second. The Motion passed.

Trevor Laboski, Principal of Big Sky High School in Missoula, presented information on MCPS Health Science Academy at Big Sky High School which is Montana's first and only career academy focusing on Health Sciences, and is projected for implementation next academic year. This will be the first Science Technology Engineering & Math (STEM) biomedical veterinary academy in Montana through Project Lead the Way. Academies are new to Montana but have survived and have been around since the 1960's. The root of academy is the melding of both vocational/career ready and college preparation. This program is designed as a rigorous college prep course to help high school students establish a career pathway, in addition to helping the students become college ready. Career Technical Education (CTE) vocational sequences are based on state and national data to increase return on investment for students and communities. This models helps address the question of "why do I have to learn this?" Mr. Laboski also notes that teachers many times are not sure where their subject areas apply and are utilized in the world of work. The model utilizes smaller learning communities and necessitates a teacher externship component resulting in changes to curriculum and program design. The Missoula Chamber has been a primary partner and been instrumental in helping establish summer externships for teachers. An Advisory Board is being formed and the two local hospitals will be providing the externships. The concept is that business helps design curriculum and lessons working closely with educators. Traditionally, education creates pathways and programs now business and industry are creating. Schools have not traditionally been a part of economic development and it has been a transition for faculty to see examples of teaching from what has "always been offered" versus what is needed and why. There is no specific target group, but the curriculum is designed for all students. Mr. Laboski stated that he sees relevance in allowing opportunities for students to get their associates degree while still in high school, a next

step beyond dual-credit. The academy leadership is sensitive to competition for internships with U of M and the COT so it will be a new experience working with departments that do not usually have internships such as medical coders and phlebotomists. This program will be modified based on data and job market growth opportunities allowing for continued customization and expansion into other academy offerings.

- Mr. Laboski responded to committee questions inquiring into levels of support for this model stating the school must be vetted to be an academy and have a certain environment. The school board and administration are very supportive in allowing for the necessary environmental changes to take place. The leadership hopes to offer more academies as they grow, but this will be based on job market growth and data. Question arose around assessments and Mr. Laboski reassured the Committee that all skills and credits were transferable back into the “traditional” educational model if the student discovers they don’t want to go down this path, Student’s can reenter the regular classroom without loss of time or credit. Middle School administrators are interested in doing some preliminary interest inventories. The Committee recommended that the Academy leadership continue to research what has been done in other areas of the State regarding Bio Medicine and facilitate these relationships for continued sharing and opportunities to learn from each other.

## **V. Educational Models**

Margaret Bowles presented a new innovative model for Adult Basic Education (ABE) for those at risk and/or who don’t finish high school called the Integrated Basic Education Skills Training (I-BEST) Like Model. The concept involved the integration of adult basic education and professional/technical instruction. The model started in Washington in 2004. In Montana, there are 20 ABE programs, serving people who do not have a Diploma or GED. This program helps them prepare for and obtain a GED, gain skills to obtain a job, retain a job and/or enter postsecondary education. The goal is not just to attain a GED but prepare them to be career or post secondary ready. FVCC is experimenting with this model by placing an ABE teacher in a regular postsecondary class to assist the challenged students in the classroom and with homework assignments. When needed these students are encouraged to enroll in ABE course work.

It has been a successful program thus far, but there are no solid statistics as of yet. The focus is to engage, retain and transition students to a credential. GED programs housed on college campuses often feel siloed. The goal is to better integrate and transition to post secondary without the need for developmental education that will cost the student money on a class that will not get them credit while improving the success rate of obtaining a degree of credential.

Chair Crum suggested that Tom Kotynski and Senator Gillan, who were unable to present, be invited back at another time.

## **VI. Next Steps**

Senator Buttrey passed out a chart depicting Unemployment by Level of Education in the US. Montana closely mirrors the trend thus further emphasizing the importance of education as it correlates with wage earnings and unemployment. Committee members stated how refreshing to see the level of action being taken by OPI and OCHE to help keep kids in school and move them on to other educational and career pathways options Committee members voiced pleasure to see a steady progression with the pathways approaches but want to ensure local

communities are connected to also include employment and training program providers to ensure they are aware of these resources for their customer base. Other comments and recommendation as follows:

- Review the tools from the Career Pathways Technical Assistance Award to assist with ways to engage regional supports. Engage Chambers, especially the Missoula Chamber, to share in their experience and advice regarding the Missoula Academy pilot in hopes to create more interest.
- Mr. Cech did request that staff review and possible amend the 45 day turnaround for securing a letter of support from SWIB for submission of federal grants. Recent grants have had as little as a thirty-day turn around.
- Revisit vision/mission/goals of Committee that were the result of the last strategic planning meeting in 2009 and clarify what outputs are needed.
- The meeting concluded with Mr. Cech making a motion that OCHE applicant eligible grants requiring or wishing for SWIB support be coordinated through OCHE, and that OCHE will provide the SWIB with a summary and framework for their grant application for approval consideration within the timeframe allotted for development of the grant. Ms Bowles provided a second. John Cech amended the motion to include OPI applicant eligible secondary education grants requiring or wishing for SWIB support be coordinated through OPI. The assigned coordinator will work with the SWIB staff to provide the grant proposal summary and framework to be considered by the SWIB Board for support. Ms Bowles provided a second

The Motion passed.

The Next meeting is tentatively schedules for May 23, 2012

Chair Crum adjourned the meeting at 4:30pm.

