

CDILL Committee Meeting Notes – July 31, 2018

Committee One: Lifelong Learning

In attendance: JD LaRock, Rosalin Acosta, Jean Eddy, David Cedrone, Chris Gabrieli

By phone: Marjorie Ringrose, Pat Meservey, Reinier Moquete

Committee Two: Programmatic Aspects of Lifelong Learning

In attendance: J.D. LaRock, Secretary James Peyser, Pat Meservey

By phone: Sue Cicco, Joe Fuller

Committee Three: Institutional Partners in the Massachusetts System

In attendance: J.D. LaRock, Joanna Dowling, Michael London, Pat Merservey, Oswald Mondajar, Christina Royal, Mary Sarris

Comments and Discussion about the Role of Student Support and Coaching.

- The Commonwealth needs to create a more efficient and responsive system to guide the learning process – both for individual learners and whether programs or learning cohorts are producing skills and credentialed persons in the right mix to meet economic need. A digital innovation can produce a very skilled learner, but it must be connected to really high-touch coaching AND also a nimble feedback loop so that coaches can adjust in real time to different demands.
- Learners don't always know what they want. We need to find a way to present learners with more data at different critical points – labor market data on jobs that are in demand, credentialing data on which credentials are being accepted by employers, completion and outcome data showing whether learners at an institution or program are completing a certificate or credential and getting a job. Even with clarity, learners need a regular mechanism to get information and also receive guidance and interpretation.
- We have spent a lot of time during this Commission deliberation on the topic of student support and coaching. One issue is how to deliver wrap-around services that are both organized to the credential but also individualized to the learner.
- Students lack information about the marketplace – job requirements, etc. This is a big issue even among college students, who usually do not have a formal career plan. Together, we need to develop much better career guidance in middle and high schools to give learners better choices. The Commonwealth needs to take a more active role in revitalizing career services at colleges – and also help faculty members increase their awareness about broader economic drivers.
- There is a sequence of priorities here, and we need to think about the digital core first – create the learning platform and then follow with a coaching model that supports both learners and the content of the program. We need to ensure that learners throughout their educational experience

learn how to navigate through the system, increasing their own capacity to self-discover and self-navigate.

- Use three sectors to test willingness to participate in skill and experiential component. Need something very industry-specific so that we can be feasible about proof of concept
- There is a high percentage of high school graduates who enroll in college, but we do not have much data on who drops out and the reasons behind a decision to leave a program. Data does not yield the right level of input about affordability, competency, or other barriers. We don't know what happens to those who withdraw (or not complete) from a program. Without a connection to a program or an institution, this population is much harder to reach.
- Our priority target population: should be defined as the older end of opportunity youth as well as entry level worker and those with access barriers

Comments and Discussion about Lifelong Learning and Systems Development, and what we mean by 'Platform'.

- We circulated a white paper for review by the Commission that described a 'platform' as an essential system component and asked for further discussion as to functions and purposes. Inherently, having a lifelong learning platform calls for the state to create something on a systems level. If we create a digital product to serve the needs of both employers and learners, there is a much greater need to market the availability of that digital product. One role for the 'platform' is to serve as middleware and an aggregator – collect information and disseminate to avoid fragmented programs.
- One assumption we have is that a key driver leading to the development of digitally-enabled learning programs is a response to a current market failure by education and workforce systems. How would learners navigate this system? The 'platform' should document provision of support services as well as broadcast / disseminate examples of emerging practices. Its primary purpose is to disseminate skills needed and employer demand for jobs that have career content.
- The 'platform' has to provide value to partners, users and institutions. It should serve (a) statewide perspective on where the market is going; (b) be specific with skill content (that is, prioritize workforce development rather than postsecondary degrees), and (c) use a digital platform to overcome the inflexibility of brick and mortar. This existence of this Commission is the result of a need for better integration between workforce development and higher education.
- We want this 'platform' to be progressive and continuous. Students should be able to get support for an initial job, but also would create an opportunity for ongoing connection and re-connection. Who is the population that we are trying to engage? It sounds like this Commission's work could support students who aren't already connected to existing institutions. The 'platform' is a tool to help learners move forward and demonstrate where engagement with education can take them (thereby addressing one of the biggest reasons for dropping out).
- Tennessee and Indiana have been active in thinking about lifelong learning. Their work divides learners into two cohorts – (a) learners who are on a mainstream college pathway and (b) those

who are not. Cohort Two is an untapped group. Prior Learning Assessment is based in colleges because it is all about marketing, but so far there has been no effective PLA that has been created for the workforce system.

- New learning models, using digital platforms, are in development. We need to ensure that we can achieve an economy of scale from investment in these new designs, and we need a critical mass of employers and learners to get those economies.
- 'Platform' connects learners to a job. A lifelong learning system continues to move you through a job to advance your career.
- Term 'platform' is used in two ways, and we should further assess whether it's a marketplace as well as a "market maker?" What's the extent to which it meets student needs? Digital learning marketplaces aren't as helpful for the learner compared to seamless platform that's all encompassing.
- Need to augment job training to make it more digital and go beyond basics
- There is an ongoing complexity about whether we are working to improve the workforce development system or whether we are seeking to improve postsecondary degree attainment. One issue is the intersection between higher education and an actual job. The general thought is that we could achieve scale by focusing on workforce development, but need to bring in higher education players as those entities that deliver much of the workforce skill training AND as the place where workforce credentials can articulate into an academic degree.

Workforce options are less apparent/visible than higher education options. One element of this platform is to help learners access the workforce system assuming it is part of the higher education system. Learners don't always know what specific credentials will help them gain certain jobs (*i.e.*, "degrees as a proxy").

- 'Platform' seems to imply a clearinghouse function, which requires strong validation and screening.
- Soft skills could be foundational piece of this effort, but there needs to be substantial technical, job-specific components
- Ultimately, the entity at the center of the lifelong learning system would be a collection of higher education *and* workforce partners
- The 'platform' serves the same function that "middleware" does in keeping a computer operating system connected to software applications. It doesn't really offer an actual product – it is NOT a delivery platform. It needs to scan the landscape, bring in data, develop relationships with employers, etc., while ensuring that delivery is done by broader collection of entities/partners.
- Commission discussion continually describes the core functions as "curator, connector, coordinator." A state-based entity needs to be tasked to lead this effort. First task is to form a specific program in a specific industry for a specific job set (*i.e.*, curate). Then, need to spread this to different industries. The connector role is to explain how it's different and what the

resources are to build this out. The term “catalyst” should also be added, because of the ongoing need to engage employers and keep them involved

Comments and Discussion about Learning Content & Industry Sectors for Focus

- Commission recommends that we start with the health care sector, given who has been defined as a target population, the level of need (as expressed by the Workforce Skills Cabinet), the demand for middle skills workers, and ability to build on existing efforts.
- We support an exclusive focus on competency-based learning models. This approach is the easiest way to embed skill needs that cut across different sectors – for example, increasing learning content that promotes data analytics as something everyone needs to be well versed in with a focus on access by currently employed workers.
- What considerations do we need to think about for creating a new entity to promote different learning content within priority sectors? Being eligible for federal funding is critical, also connecting students from non-degree/credit training programs with credit and also employer network. The entity could work with existing institutions to build highly workforce-oriented virtual academy that is eligible for Title IV. Re-deploy existing workforce funds instead of depending on higher education funding so that it feels more like a workforce purpose.
- We need to focus on ecosystem development – we want to create energy around the sector for people who are developers, learners, content providers, etc. It is important to have employers on board who are plugging this platform as a way to help their workforce obtain a higher paying position or increase job security in the face of skill gaps.
- The entity provides coordination – develops relationships with employers, working with employers to articulate vision, with learners, utilizing what’s in the system to build career pipelines, and also collect, analyze and publish research and evaluation.
- would want to focus on workforce-focused rather than the degrees. Intrigued by the idea of curating best content from existing institutions
- What do we have to say about some college – no degree population? Do we need own version of SNHU/WGU for degree attainment/completion? Skills-based platform that is employer-oriented and building towards promotion?