

**State Scholars Initiative
Advisory Board Conference Call
December 10, 2007
9am (MTN)**

Advisory Board Members Present

Barry Munitz
Christine Johnson
Leon Lederman
Marshall L. Lind
Piedad Robertson
Roger Sampson
Rosemary Lahasky for Arthur J. Rothkopf
Stephen M. Wing
Susan Traiman

Advisory Board Members Not Present

Brian Fitzgerald
Charles Kolb
David Spence
Deborah Wilds
Jane Nichols
Janis Somerville
Mike Cohen
Raymund A. Paredes
Rod Chu
Suellen Reed

WICHE Staff and Evaluators

David Longanecker
Jere Mock
Terese Rainwater
Christian Martinez
Michelle Medal
Kay Hulstrom
Diana Robinson

OVAE Staff

Nancy Brooks

★ Welcome Roger Sampson, president, Education Commission of the States to SSI
Advisory Board

David Longanecker, WICHE, and Terese Rainwater, WICHE, both introduced and
welcomed the newest member of the SSI Advisory Board, Roger Sampson.

★ SSI National Summit/Advisory Board meeting

Rainwater began the call by saying that she wanted to make sure that all the advisory board members have the National Summit on Academic Rigor and Relevance in Boston, MA on their calendars. This will be the last in-person meeting for the advisory board. Board members will receive more information about this conference shortly. “Save the Date” cards were sent out on Friday, December 7, 2007. Following the format of last year’s meeting, state directors will be presenting their successes and challenges at the advisory board meeting. The dates for the summit are April 29 – 30, 2008 with the advisory board meeting starting at 8:00 a.m. on the 29th. Summit registration will begin at 1:00 p.m. and the Summit will begin at 2:30 p.m. on April 29th. The summit will end at 2:00 p.m. on April 30th.

David Longanecker said that one topic we plan to discuss at the summit is the sustainability of SSI after federal funding concludes. It is therefore important that advisory board members plan to attend the summit following the advisory board meeting.

Leon Lederman commented that this would be his first in-person meeting, and because there are so many institutions that are trying to “fix” education across the United States, he is very interested in learning more about what is happening in states across the country.

Rainwater replied that one way that the states interact and work together to achieve the goals of SSI is by providing technical assistance to each other. WICHE works with states on policy issues and tries to learn from the success of other states. Every month, WICHE hosts a conference call with all the state directors to support this process.

Christine Johnson said that she would like to see how SSI has actually changed policy in the states, and Piedad Robertson asked if there was any information available about support coming from the business community.

Rainwater responded that Diana Robinson, Northern Illinois University, has been working on collecting this information by interviewing state directors and business-education community members about promising practices within their state as part of the independent evaluation.

Robinson added that she is studying how the role of the business community is affecting student course taking behavior, and she will provide a summary of her findings to board members at the summit.

Christine Johnson asked if there was any prospect of continued Federal funding, and Rainwater answered that while WICHE is hopeful for continued funding, given the administration change in 2008, it seems possible that there will not be additional funding.

David Longanecker added that current SSI funding is from the Education Secretary's discretionary fund, as opposed to an authorized fund, so it is more vulnerable to a funding cut.

Johnson shared her hope that there will be continued support, and Susan Traiman commented that continuity of this approach could be useful for the new administration.

Rainwater shared that several states including Utah, Virginia, and Tennessee have experienced success with continued sustainability through the support of the state and business community.

Piedad Robertson asked whether key congressional staff have been invited to the summit, and Rainwater answered that "Save the Date" cards had been sent out to many groups, including state policymakers. Each state team will be comprised of six members. She said that Dolores Mize, Nancy Brooks, and she are working on a meta-analysis that will be presented at the summit. In addition, the data collected by Karen Paulson and Diana Robinson will be presented as well. Rainwater stated that she is working on securing the speakers, whose speeches will be synthesized into a paper to be distributed about a month after the summit.

Nancy Brooks shared the hope that advisory board members will take time out of their busy schedules to participate in the last in-person Advisory Board meeting and attend the summit as well. Rainwater reminded board members that WICHE will cover their travel and lodging expenses for the meeting, and will offer the first 40 states to register a team an honorarium which will cover registration fees, meals provided at the summit, and lodging for up to two nights for each team member. WICHE has set aside some funds to cover all expenses of the original 14 SSI states. The ten states selected under WICHE's administration will use their SSI award money to cover the expenses of their state team.

★ SSI Data

Rainwater reviewed the details of the first project goal of the external evaluation, which looks at promising practices. Diana Robinson, NIU, is responsible for collecting this data.

The second and third project goals of the external evaluation focus on student course level data and perception data, respectively. Karen Paulson, NCHEMS, is responsible for collecting this data. Student's course-level data is not generally collected. Requesting information about student course-taking patterns has shown that vast differences exist in the fundamental philosophies between those asking the questions, data analysts, and the various data systems available. This has been a substantial hurdle, but now nine out of ten states are collecting data, which has increased from three in October 2007. This data has the potential for revealing significant information about SSI, including whether students are actually completing the SSI Core Course of Study.

As part of WICHE's data collection activities, we have found that participating schools and school districts often have a misperception of how many of their students qualify as State Scholars. Preliminary examination of student course enrollment data demonstrates how few students actually complete the 15.5 credit State Scholars Core Course of Study. Rainwater stated that the year two evaluation reports were completed in September and October. A supplement to these preliminary reports will be distributed early next year.

Leon Lederman asked about how well are our high schools doing, and commented that it is important for students to know what future career choices are like. He is hopeful that we will someday get the data measurement systems working to measure high school performance.

Rainwater responded by saying that the data which SSI is collecting gives us a starting point for conversations about how to measure high school performance. She said that initially states told us that they could not get students to take Physics, and now schools are trying to find more teachers for these classes because of increased student enrollment.

Longanecker added that Lederman's point was an important one, and that we should look at our traditional education partners such as ACT for assistance in gathering strong data that would prove the importance of taking a rigorous course of study.

Rainwater reminded everyone that the third focus of the evaluation is perception survey data, which we look forward to sharing in the next evaluation report.

★ DVD release

Rainwater stated that WICHE has created a DVD at the request of the SSI states that is scheduled to be released early next year. WICHE hired a film company to interview people with diverse careers from across the country. The DVD demonstrates that rigorous course taking is necessary in a wide variety of careers. It is about 17 minutes long, and is meant to compliment other SSI materials.

★ Other

Leon Lederman commented that he was recently involved in a National Science Board meeting on STEM education, and that P-16 education councils were brought up as a possible collaborator on these programs. He asked if these organizations might be a potential source of valuable support for SSI?

Barry Munitz answered that he could bear personal witness to the strengths of P-16 councils, as the co-Chair of the P-16 council in California. He said that there are a whole series of state-level and local P-16 councils that are emerging. The California P-16

council is chartered by the state board and therefore should have some stability. He offered to provide the preliminary report to other members of the advisory board.

Leon Lederman questioned whether the system in place in California has the resilience necessary to survive a change in political office. Munitz replied that in 2010 California will have a new governor and superintendent and they hope to prove the council's importance to the new administration. Only time will tell if they are successful in this mission.

Rainwater commented that there are a number of SSI state directors that either sit on their state's P-16 council or have SSI programs with close connections to their state's council. She named Arizona, Kentucky, Utah and Wyoming as examples.

Longanecker added that there is national evaluation of P-16 councils being undertaken by the NCPPHE with funding from the Lumina Foundation. Rainwater said she will locate the report and send it to Dr. Lederman.

Rainwater closed the call by reminding everyone to save the dates for the summit, and have a happy holiday season.