

MODEL LABORATORY SCHOOLS

AT EASTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY

MODEL LABORATORY SCHOOL ADVISORY COUNCIL

MEETING MINUTES

September 14, 2020

Via Zoom

4:30 p.m.

Members present: Rodney Davis, Community Member
Mendi Goble, Community Member
Robin Jones, Model Parent
Lynn Taylor Tye, ECU Board of Regents, ex-officio
Tom Martin, Faculty Member Outside Model
Gerald Tatum, Model Parent
Heather Taylor, Model Faculty Member
Katelyn Upchurch, Model Student
Sara Zeigler, Faculty Member Outside Model
John Williamson, Chair, Model Superintendent

Members not present: Mendi Goble, Community Member

Also present: Dr. Christopher Budano, Associate Dean K-12 Programs / Model
Director of Teaching & Learning
Erick Collings, Model Director of Communications
Laura Dedic, Principal, Model High
Donna McGuire, Model Executive Assistant
David Naylor, Principal, Model Elementary
Kim Puckett, Assistant Superintendent for Student Services

Copies of the meeting agenda and PowerPoint slides are bound at the conclusion of these Minutes.

I. Call to Order

Mr. John Williamson, ECU Dean of K-12 Programs and Superintendent of Model Laboratory Schools, opened the meeting at 4:30 p.m. He welcomed new member, Dr. Sara Zeigler and thanked returning members for remaining on the Council.

II. Review of Minutes – 6-2-2020

Minutes of the June 2, 2020 meeting were provided to Council members prior to the meeting for review.

III. Review of Items – Good News

Mr. Williamson reviewed some good news, including:

- Everett Parker-Noblitt was a 2021 National Merit Finalist – the only one in Madison County
- The Model Class of 1965 made a scholarship donation in memory of Estelle Bayer (Laura Dedic’s mother.)
- Mock Trial won the state tournament and a national tournament in an online format
- The 2021 Rock Star Award was presented to faculty member Ellen Woolery
- The number of qualifying Advanced Placement scores was tripled from the 2018-19 school year. There were 119 qualifying scores, including 14 8th grade students who earned college credit

IV. Review of Items – Calendar Update

Mr. Williamson reviewed changes in key dates for the school year as follows:

- August 10 – Original planned start date for students
- Start date was delayed due to COVID-19 and Governor recommendations
- August 10 - September 3 – Teacher planning and training days
- September 8 – Began NTI (non-traditional/remote instruction)
 - September 28 – Planned return for face-to-face instruction
 - Those electing remote instruction (112 students, 18%) will continue with NTI
 - Teachers will provide both face-to-face and remote instruction simultaneously
 - Humanities classes on Monday and Wednesday
 - STEM classes on Tuesday and Thursday

V. Review of Items – Enrollment Update

Mr. Williamson provided the up-to-date enrollment data reflecting start of school enrollment for 2018-19, 2019-20 and 2020-21. During the current school year the expected enrollment prior to the pandemic was 101 students more than the actual number when school started.

VI. Review of Items – Reasons for Withdrawal

Mr. Williamson shared a chart reflecting the reasons given for leaving by Model families, which was tuition costs for the majority. He noted that the majority of those who left due to tuition concerns were in lower grades and questioned the long-term implications of those seats being open.

VII. How does Model rebound from enrollment losses?

Mr. Williamson asked for input about how to recover from the enrollment decline. Should Model accept it, downsize and move forward with fewer students and staff? He asked what the Council member believed about Model's future and whether Model's response to instruction throughout the pandemic would have an influence.

Mr. Tatum said the families he had spoken with who left Model indicated that it was due to virtual instruction. Parents wanted or needed their children in school and did not want to pay tuition while their children were home with them. Mr. Williamson agreed this was an issue, but noted that we were required by the Governor to wait until September 28th to start in-person classes.

Dr. Zeigler said some ECU students have had the same sentiment. She also said some ECU employees who are Model parents feel that Model is not conservative enough. ECU's masking and 6 foot distancing mandates are more stringent. They prefer to continue virtual learning, want more social distancing and staggering of classes. She noted that students believe ECU is too restrictive.

Mr. Tatum said he had spoken with parents who were not ready for students to return as well as several who want them to return. Mr. Williamson said parents will be able to choose either option.

Mr. Williamson asked, when the pandemic is finally over, how do we get the students to return?

Ms. Jones said parents have told her they cannot afford to pay tuition while students are learning virtually, but they will add them back to the enrollment list when school is back in session.

Mr. Williamson said based on current enrollment numbers we will have to downsize staff.

Mr. Davis said he has not heard much discussion, but that the comments have been generally positive. People appreciate the regular communication regarding options. Most of the issues are related to financial concerns. They cannot afford tuition while students are at home, but he said he thinks students will return when this is over if Model does a good job.

Mr. Williamson asked the Council to help keep the administration updated on how Model is doing.

Mr. Martin said he had not heard much, but what had been shared was positive. He noted the recent article about Mary Tom Emanuel visiting students at their homes.

Ms. Upchurch said she found her fellow students to be in different stages of acceptance and split between the desire to return to school and the fear of returning. She said she thinks when they actually start and see the precautions that are in place it will ease the apprehension.

Mr. Williamson asked if another option should be given for people to change to remote or face-to-face learning should be given. Ms. Jones said she thinks people have generally made their choice.

Mr. Naylor said he had received positive comments from parents and virtual learning had been going well with just some minor technical issues.

Ms. Dedic agreed. She said parents appreciate the communication and students are just concerned about what the “new normal” will be.

Dr. Zeigler suggested a video tour be prepared to help inform and reassure students and families about what to expect. Mr. Williamson said the principals had created videos regarding virtual learning and we could add “b-roll” of the hallways and classrooms.

Ms. Taylor said teachers have been excited to begin virtual learning and want to have students back for face-to-face instruction. Students are ready to return to some kind of normal.

Mr. Williamson said he heard from the comments that communication and flexibility were key to moving forward.

VIII. Residential Academy in the Arts

Mr. Williamson reviewed the concept of a statewide residential academy in the arts similar to the Craft and Gatton Academies. It would be available to qualified junior and senior high school students and include dance, vocal music, visual arts and drama. He and Dr. Zeigler have been discussing the concept as a collaboration between Model and the College of Letters, Arts and Social Sciences.

The consensus was favorable of the idea. Mr. Martin asked about funding. Mr. Williamson reviewed information about the Craft Academy housed at Morehead State University and the Gatton Academy located at Western Kentucky University, both STEM-focused. Those academies required \$10,000,000 in start-up money and are maintained through State funding and additional donations. He said that ECU’s legislative liaison,

Ethan Witt, had indicated that matching funds would be necessary to seek legislative support.

Additional comments included:

- Allowing students to participate in some aspect at the college level with college students and to utilize the Center for the Arts;
- The possibility of partnering with the College of Business to manage the program and to explore ways to create more interdisciplinary opportunities;
- Minimal new investment would be needed for staff;
- Seeking alumni support;

Mr. Williamson said he and Dr. Zeigler would be meeting with Betina Gardner to pursue options, but they had wanted to seek the Council's input first.

IX. Additional Topics/Comments

Mr. Williamson asked if there were additional comments or topics to discuss. Dr. Zeigler asked how the faculty and staff had reacted to the current virtual instruction arrangements. Mr. Williamson said it is incredibly difficult. Mr. Naylor said it is a challenge to not miss students who need help. Ms. Taylor said it was "trial by fire," but that having a separate online class for primary had been helpful.

Mr. Williamson said he appreciated the insight/feedback from Mr. Tatum, Mr. Davis and Ms. Jones. Mr. Tatum said there was positive feedback about communication and parents really appreciate the technical assistance from Mr. Hoover. Mr. Williamson said the addition of Director of Communications Erick Collings had helped Model greatly improve communications.

Mr. Williamson reminded Council members that he is available for anyone who needs to talk.

X. Next Meeting

Monday, December 14, 2020, 4:30 p.m., via Zoom.

XI. Adjourn

The meeting concluded at 5:25 p.m.

John Williamson
Dean of K-12 Programs/ Model Laboratory School Superintendent