

P-16 Legislative Briefing and Discussion 1/30/08

Meeting Summary

On January 30, 2008, ten members of the Minnesota State Legislature attended a meeting on the work of the Minnesota P-16 Education Partnership with the organization's current chair, University of Minnesota President Robert Bruininks, and vice chair, Commissioner of Education Alice Seagren. At the outset of the meeting, President Bruininks welcomed participants and shared background on the Partnership. Consultant Suzanne Tacheny then shared findings from a study she conducted at the outset of President Bruininks' tenure as chair on future directions for Minnesota's P-16 Partnership. U of M College Readiness Consortium Director Kent Pekel then gave an overview of the four goals that the P-16 Partnership has agreed to accomplish before the end of President Bruininks' term as chair in 2009, which are:

1. Developing a "macro" definition of postsecondary and workforce readiness in Minnesota
2. Defining postsecondary and workforce readiness in science
3. Identifying strategies for improving K-12 instruction in science
4. Creating a longitudinal data system

The following were among the major themes of the discussion that took place after these opening comments:

- President Bruininks noted that when the Partnership was created four years ago, the members decided that the primary purpose of the organization would be to promote open and honest dialog and to accomplish tasks that none of the partners could do as well alone. The founding organizations also agreed to support the operation of the Partnership from their existing internal resources and not to seek a continuing appropriation from the State.
- Commissioner Seagren noted that the P-16 Partnership's work has mostly focused on high-level implementation rather than making policy. She shared that given that emphasis on implementation, she would not have sought to participate directly in the work of the P-16 Partnership during her tenure in the legislature.
- Several legislators shared that although they know that the P-16 Partnership exists, they are not aware of what the Partnership does or exactly who is involved. They suggested that this lack of legislative awareness and involvement is a problem because it increases the likelihood that the legislature could be working at odds with the Partnership rather than working with the Partnership to align policy and practice.
- A legislator noted that the governor's office is involved through the participation of the Commissioner and the Director of OHE, but that the legislature is not. This legislator noted that legislators are involved in the P-16/20 organizations in other states.
- A legislator expressed concern that over emphasizing college and workforce readiness risks ignoring the "non-economic" goals of a education. The legislator suggested that

such a broader focus on the liberal arts is not only educationally sound but will build public support for education.

- A legislator asked how membership in the P-16 Partnership has been determined, to which President Bruininks replied that the common standard for membership has been organizations that play an important statewide role in education. He also explained that current members have voted on new members and that during his term as chair the P-16 Partnership added the Mentoring Partnership of Minnesota and the Minnesota Association of Charter Schools to the membership.
- A legislator asked why the P-16 membership does not include a representative of the early childhood community, and President Bruininks agreed to consider adding that perspective and launching an effort to address early childhood issues during the 2008-2009 academic year.
- A legislator recalled that teacher preparation was one of the issues that the P-16 Partnership was created to address and wondered if anything had happened. Commissioner Seagren noted that some early work was done and that she and President Bruininks have agreed to consider adding teacher quality to the P-16 agenda next year.
- A legislator noted that when the legislature is in session, legislators rarely have time to participate in efforts such as the P-16 Partnership, and also noted that legislators' work is focused on policy rather than implementation, which has been the focus of the P-16 Partnership to date. The legislator also noted, however, that better and more formal lines of communication between the P-16 Partnership and the legislature are needed.
- A legislator noted that the P-16 Partnership could be used much more regularly as a way to solicit feedback from key organizations on legislative proposals.
- A legislator noted that one or more bills expanding the membership of the P-16 Partnership will be introduced during the 2008 legislative session
- The following ideas for creating closer connections between the P-16 Partnership and the legislature were discussed:
 1. Adding legislative committee chairs to the membership of the partnership
 2. Holding regular meetings between legislative committee chairs and the leadership of the P-16 Partnership
 3. Periodic written reports to the legislature
 4. Regular testimony at legislative hearings
 5. Dissemination of P-16 documents to legislators and staff
 6. Convene a joint conference to examine critical issues in national and international context

7. Ask consultant Suzanne Tacheny to interview legislative leaders using the same template she used to interview the leaders of P-16 organizations during the summer of 2008 and to write a short report on legislators' priorities and questions
- Kent Pekel noted that a new P-16 Partnership Web site will be launched by March 1
 - President Bruininks and Commissioner Seagren committed to share legislators' feedback at the March 3 meeting of the P-16 Partnership Roundtable and to remain in closer communication with legislators as the work of the Partnership moves forward