

NVRC Workforce Task Force

Education Community “Listening Session”

March 26, 2014

Main themes:

Overview:

The Northern Virginia Regional Commission (NVRC) held a strategic retreat last September and identified workforce as an *issue of regional significance*. Late last Fall, the Commissioners formed the NVRC Workforce Task Force to examine this issue and to determine the Commission’s role in developing solutions for current and future regional workforce challenges.

The NVRC Workforce Task Force was aware that a number of well-established organizations, institutions and initiatives were engaged in workforce but that their activities were largely isolated. Task Force members also recognized that no comprehensive, regional strategy existed to address workforce concerns. Therefore, the Task Force scheduled a series of “Listening Sessions” in order to hear the strategic perspectives of various workforce stakeholders, to learn what’s successful and what gaps exist, and to gauge the willingness of workforce stakeholders to work together.

This document summarizes the third “Listening Session:” the perceptions and needs of the education community. Eight school divisions, the Community College and three institutions of higher education sent representatives. All education participants feel that a major challenge is achieving greater collaboration by our K-20 educational institutions *and* the business community.

In the first “Listening Session,” business representatives told the Task Force they are competing in a rapidly changing environment and feel that the WIBs and educators should focus more directly on the realities of the market place and projected workforce gaps. In this third “Listening Session,” educators said they want businesses to become more invested in students and teachers in order to expose them to industry. This revealed not only a communication gap, but also important missed opportunities to collaborate on how students are prepared for future careers.

Task Force members have also discovered contradictory incentives that make workforce development difficult such as:

- K-12 education programs are held accountable for student success by using exam-based metrics (Standards of Learning (SOLs) exams), on-time graduation rates, and whether and where students go to college, but not whether the students have demonstrated skills or how well they are prepared for the workplace; and
- Universities are rated by how selective they are in choosing their students (i.e. how many they choose to *not* education), not by how well they prepare graduates for work.

Participating Northern Virginia workforce stakeholders say they are willing to meet and work together; and that indeed the “Listening Session” discussions were positive, revealing, and productive. Many workforce stakeholders have opined that it’s the local governments, and specifically the local elected officials, who are best suited to serve the role as convener, to nurture regional collaboration, and also to communicate the changing look of secondary and post-secondary education to educators, parents, and students.

- b. Elected officials could **promote platforms that allow “post-and-match” opportunities** in two categories:
- **Business and school partnerships** that share resources matched to a wide variety of teacher and student needs or goals (similar to Fairfax County’s Partnership Starter or the Arlington Chamber’s STEM Resource Connector).
 - A common, scalable platform for **matching candidates’ demonstrated skills and certifications with business needs** for job opportunities, internships, or contractual work, providing for a credentialed workforce that meets or exceeds market value and yields a livable NoVA wage.

Throughout the discussion participating education leaders recognized or suggested roles for local government leader in promoting and implementing these recommendations.

Other issues mentioned by multiple jurisdictions:

In addition to Dr. Templin, representatives from eight school divisions and three institutions of higher education also provided their perspectives. Many emphasized common themes and concerns, frequently referencing agreement with previous speakers, and their partnerships with NOVA’s SySTEMic Solutions. The following is a highlight summary of those thoughts and recommendations:

- Career and Technical Education (CTE) is highly valued and faces a variety of challenges – CTE is an essential part of our education portfolio that is not well understood by the general public and often not well understood by other educators;
- Because CTE is an elective, sustained collaboration by governments/schools/businesses are essential to advocating for CTE and how it’s incorporated into the school curriculum;
- budget cuts hurt electives and dual enrollment opportunities;
- budget issues cause unintended consequences especially in high school CTE courses, which are limited to 20 students for OSHA safety reasons and rely on more costly equipment;
- there is need for a unified regional approach to incorporating STEM and project-based learning into the everyday school curriculum (at the 8, 9 and 10 year old level);
- establish a regional CTE Governor’s Academy (parallel to the TJ model);
- while academic requirements have increased, the school day has not, and limited budgets and restrictive seat-time requirements (Carnegie Units) lead many school divisions to limit students to seven credits/courses per year;
- technology access remains challenging in both bandwidth and access to devices;
- K-12 and higher education need to be incorporated more into regional economic development discussions and particularly in attracting/growing desired industry clusters;
- our workforce policy should be considered more broadly/holistically to include transportation, housing, health care and other factors;
- there is slow but steady increase in students arriving for the first time to college and needing remediation (reading comprehension, writing, computation, study skills);
- there is an opportunity for all school divisions to share in a K-16 data sharing initiative currently underway in Arlington for broader meta data analysis across the region; and
- NoVA school demographics continue to change dramatically, with 90% of growth in elementary schools from minorities and immigrants, with so many kids who will be the first in their families to go to college.

Participants:

- NVCC: Dr. Bob Templin, President, Amy Harris; Mary MacPherson; Dana Kauffman
- Alexandria: Sherri Chapman, Coordinator C&TE
- Arlington: Connie Skelton – Asst. Super. Instruction; Dr. Raj Adusumilli , Asst. Super. Information Services
- Fairfax: Craig Herring, Director preK-12 Curriculum & Instruction; Sandy Evans – School Board Mason District
- Manassas: Dr. Melissa Saunders, Dir. Curriculum & Instruction
- Manassas Park: Dr. Bruce McDade, Superintendent; Christy Reavis, CTE Dept Chair
- Prince William: Kenneth Bassett, Director of Student Learning; Doug Wright, Supervisor CTE
- GMU: Paul Liberty, VP University Relations
- GWU: Paula Harper, Executive Director of Program Development and Management
- Virginia Tech: Dr. Kenneth H. Wong, Director – Northern Virginia Center

Observers:

- Jim Egenrieder – Chair of Arlington Chamber & Co-chair of NVTC Education and Workforce Committees
- Zuzana Steen – MICRON and chair NVTC Education and Workforce Committee
- David Remick – Alexandria/Arlington WIB ExDir
- Julie Mullen – NoVA Family Service/Dir Strategic Partnerships & Bus. Develop for Training Futures
- Mal Owen – Volunteer Leader/Career Network Ministry

Task Force Members (present):

- Bob Lazaro – Task Force Chair
- Janet Clarke
- Libby Garvey
- Penny Gross
- Marty Nohe

Staff: Mark Gibb / Ken Billingsley / David Schwengel / Linda Summerall / Linda Tenney