

Minutes of the Early College Joint Committee Meeting
Wednesday, April 25, 2018
3:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.
One Ashburton Place, Boston, MA

Members of the Early College Joint Committee Present:

Jim Peyser, Secretary of Education

Chris Gabrieli, Chair, Board of Higher Education

Margaret McKenna, Member of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education

Members Absent:

Paul Sagan, Chair, Board of Elementary and Secondary Education

Paul Toner, Member, Board of Higher Education

Participating Department Staff:

Cliff Chuang, Sr. Associate Commissioner, Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Carlos Santiago, Commissioner of Higher Education

Patricia Marshall, Deputy Commissioner for Academic Affairs & Student Success, DHE

Christine Williams, Director of Strategic Initiatives, DHE

Chair Gabrieli called the meeting of the Early College Joint Committee (ECJC) to order at 3:06pm. He noted his excitement about the launch of the early college initiative. He expressed appreciation for the thoughtfulness behind the designation process, as well as the flexibility provided to applicants in the process, which has ensured that designation is ultimately based on program quality. He also remarked that while the ECJC is considering applications for approval today, it is also making important determinations on how to work with applicants moving forward who have not received a final designation.

Secretary Peyser added that there is a lot of theory we are currently putting into practice and that there may be changes that we still wish to make to the basic program design.

Commissioner Santiago asked whether the five programs were brought forward for approval due to monetary concerns or because they were the five that stood out for quality. Mr. Chuang, as well as Ms. Marshall and Ms. Williams, confirmed that these five were the programs that met a high bar of quality.

Secretary Peyser added that in addition to the process for recommended approval being a unanimous one (unanimous between DHE, DESE, and EOE staff), that there was a high bar set for program approval.

Ms. Williams voiced that there are still strong applications in the pool that were not recommended for approval at this time, but they are still under consideration subject to clarification or policy changes prior to approval.

Secretary Peyser said that even if applicants are not being approved today, that the focus is on working with these applicants until their programs are strong enough to be approved.

On a motion duly made and seconded, the ECJC unanimously approved the minutes from the ECJC meeting on May 31, 2018. (member McKenna moved, Secretary Peyser seconded).

Chair Gabrieli noted that we should also discuss how we can develop a positive community of practice around this work, including by partnering with outside organizations that have expressed a willingness to and interest in working on early college issues.

Next, Dr. Marshall provided an overview of the current status of the Early College Designation process and the designation recommendations. She expressed appreciation for staff work and the efforts of campuses and districts who are involved, and underscored DHE's commitment to the early college work being grounded in serving historically underserved students. She also noted the importance of the interagency work between DESE, DHE, and EOE.

Ms. Williams then provided a refresher on the designation application process, noting that 21 applicants moved forward from the preliminary phase; 18 of them submitted final applications. The applications were reviewed by 15 staff members from across the agencies. Staff conducted interviews with all of the applicants with staff from DESE, DHE, and EOE.

Chair Gabrieli asked whether the scoring rubrics will be shared with the applicants, and Ms. Williams responded that they had not yet discussed this. Mr. Chuang noted that there is a commitment to giving substantive feedback to applicants. Ms. Williams noted that face-to-face conversations will be helpful in terms of sharing feedback from the review teams and interviews.

Dr. Marshall noted that if applicants did not meet the minimum threshold criteria in terms of points on the rubric that they were not considered further.

Chair Gabrieli noted that there is a lot of value to the field in building out criteria for authorizers, as well as funding decisions, etc. may matter even more to future applicants. Dr. Marshall remarked that colleagues from other states have reached out regarding the program, particularly its governance model. Ms. Williams stated that in the summer we will have a set of programs that will be the beginning of the community of practice. She also mentioned that models will look very different depending on a variety of factors, including geography.

Secretary Peyser noted that another model that exists is the Gateway to College model, which may not fit in the designation criteria now but could in the future.

Mr. Chuang pointed out the difference between the designation principles of Early College, which has one set of criteria, while Gateway to College students have a separate set of criteria. He offered the example of Early College's requirement that students earn at least 12 college credits.

Member McKenna noted that Bunker Hill does have a Gateway program that does serve at-risk students. She also noted that the Gateway program brings students back to the school system and we don't want that to go away, even if there are different types of early college programs.

Secretary Peyser noted that we do not want to discourage people from doing certain work if they do not necessarily meet the criteria.

Mr. Chuang expressed that once we embark on a conversation regarding sustainable funding, that may also impact the meaning of designation and general principles.

Ms. Williams remarked that, overall, applicants came up with creative ways to recruit students, focusing on those students who are historically underrepresented in higher education. She also acknowledged that this work of recruitment could be developed further.

Chair Gabrieli asked whether these proposals were in partnership with third-party organizations like OneGoal or Bottom Line. Ms. Williams commented that several programs partnered with TRIO and Gear UP. Mr. Chuang also referenced the 100 Males to College program.

Chair Gabrieli stated that in the future the ECJC should consider how to work with both public and non-profit groups in terms of how to leverage these partnerships the program expands. Member McKenna agreed that it would be important to bring them together.

Secretary Peyser stated that it seemed in the Early College programs the partnerships were driven by the institutions of higher education rather than K12 partners and asked Department staff present for their input.

Ms. Williams noted that some districts have been very active partners, while in other cases the drivers were the institutions of higher education (IHE).

Secretary Pesyer remarked that if high schools are not fully invested, then the program may fall apart.

Mr. Chuang expressed that among the five programs that are being recommended, that there is very strong partnership between the K12 partner and the IHE campus. He also noted that in cases where there are more than two partners, it becomes even more important to ensure there is a strong partnership.

Commissioner Santiago noted that, in his experience with IHE campuses, the ones involved in the program being recommended for approval have frequent interactions with their local school superintendents.

Member McKenna asked when DESE approved New Heights Charter School's charter. Mr. Chuang responded that they are in their second year. Member McKenna recalled that New Heights did not pick kids through a lottery, according to their website. Mr. Chuang noted that he does not believe that this is the case. Ms. McKenna asked that if in the New Heights' model all students are in the early college program, what would happen if students performed very poorly in the early college program in 9th grade?

Mr. Chuang noted that through the charter approval process, he is aware that New Heights Charter School does have a program that differentiates the number of credits different students receive. Ms. Williams noted that students are in different cohorts based on their academic achievement. Member McKenna asked what percentage of students in a typical high school would be in an early college program.

Chair Gabrieli referred to an American Institutes for Research study which noted that of programs that were either in-house or in a separate program, 2/3 receive a college credit nationally. Member McKenna noted that this is 100% of the students in one school, and expressed concern about the fact that since 100% of students are in the early college program, it puts students who are unsuccessful at risk.

Member McKenna noted that some students will not complete college coursework, and asked whether this meant that students will be forced to leave the school. Ms. McKenna reiterated her concern that students are, especially at a young age, experiencing issues of failure.

Mr. Chuang said that he will get back to Ms. McKenna regarding her request about New Heights and its lottery system.

Chair Gabrieli asked whether staff have any reservations regarding any of these five applications.

Ms. Williams stated that this batch was strong and staff did not have any reservations. Mr. Chuang added that with the Salem Forten Scholars program that there is a selection process among 50 juniors, but they have constructed a process that provides a relatively strong assurance regarding having an equitable group. He said that ECJC and staff should watch this issue closely but that Salem has built self-checks into this process.

Member McKenna noted that the first year or two should result in increasing interest from parents and we should consider the fact that the program may quickly expand.

Mr. Chuang stated that the issue of scale will depend on sustainable funding and that applicants would be ready to increase the scale of their programs if they identified funding.

Secretary Peyser noted that it is not a bad thing that the first cohort is effectively doing this work regardless of a funding commitment because they are committed early

adopters that will send the message to future applicants that they will need to build strong models.

Commissioner Santiago asked about how to move forward, particularly with regard to program evaluation. Ms. Williams stated that this an ongoing conversation but that these five applicants would be evaluated as part of the grant and that, in the short-term, there is an independent evaluator. She noted that in the long-term she hopes to establish performance metrics but does not currently have the funding for an independent evaluator. Mr. Chuang added that DESE has chapter 74 and charter school monitoring models that staff would look at as well and would need to establish a cycle of benchmarks and qualitative and quantitative review. Secretary Peyser stated that private funders are very interested in this type of work and may be willing to fund evaluations.

On motion duly made by Secretary Peyser and seconded by Member McKenna, the ECJC unanimously voted to approve motion 18-01, designating the five recommended Early College programs.

Following the vote, Ms. Williams suggested scheduling the next ECJC meeting prior to the commencement of the next academic year.

Chair Gabrieli turned to the discussion items and asked if there were issues spotted through the application review process applicants that warranted committee discussion. Ms. Williams spoke about Collaboration for Educational Services, which did not fit the model. Member McKenna suggested that they may be more amenable to a Gateway model.

Ms. Williams and Mr. Chuang discussed the challenges in defining “cohort” – specifically how it is defined and its intersection with the equitable access issue.

Mr. Chuang and Ms. Williams both identified some concerns around GPA requirements proposed by applicants. Chair Gabrieli noted that the ideal approach is that students are not kept out and noted that that it is normal that some students will fail. Chair Gabrieli strongly encouraged not designating programs that have GPA requirements.

Chair Gabrieli added that students should also not have to pay any fees. Member McKenna asked what the results of these programs (those having students and families pay a fee to participate) have been so far in terms of which students are taking part in the application process. Chair Gabrieli requested that staff follow up regarding these details. Secretary Peyser stated that it is not unheard of in the dual enrollment context to charge fees, but that this is not dual enrollment.

Ms. Williams pointed to an applicant that proposed coursework outside of the school day, in Framingham. She noted that while the superintendent would like to make it happen during the school day, collective bargaining issues are making it difficult at the K12 level. Mr. Chuang stated that scheduling is not a trivial matter—students should not need to navigate the structure that exists to take an afterschool course. Chair Gabrieli

agreed stating that adding college around the edges is not the goal; rather, the goal is to make it part of the school day and K12 curriculum. Secretary Peyser noted that one potential model is to have a five-course schedule as a high school student, with a study hall during the day, and a college-level course after school. Mr. Chuang expressed concern that if only 15-20 students are in such a situation, then structural support changes may not occur. He expressed that there is good faith effort being applied, but it's not clear what the students' schedule is like in some cases.

Chair Gabrieli noted that the House budget may add \$1M to dual enrollment, but that there is variability in the per-credit course charged by different institutions of higher education. Chair Gabrieli asked if it would be valuable to come up for a standard price or fee per credit. He noted that there are other costs beyond instruction—such as guidance and support costs—but that it could be powerful to have a discussion about standardizing the tuition and fee rate. Ms. Williams noted other costs of administering an early college program, such as curriculum alignment.

Secretary Peyser remarked that while the House bill has an extra \$1M for dual enrollment, but that the Senate has not weighed in either way yet.

Mr. Chuang brought up the question about when to open a brand new round to new applicants, in consideration of the fact that the group already has a lot of support work to do and also in light of the uncertainty of sustainable funding.

Secretary Peyser noted that another round may not be a good use of time if there is already a promising pool of applicants that needs technical assistance.

Chair Gabrieli observed that it would not be ideal if we only allowed the people who have already applied to apply.

Ms. McKenna noted that we do not want to make people feel like Gateway programs are not high-quality programs just because they do not fit into the early college designation criteria.

The meeting adjourned at 5:00 pm.

List of Documents Used:

- 2017-05-31 ECJC Minutes
- ECJC 18-01, "Motion to Approve Early College Program Designations."
- 2018-04-25 Report to the Early College Joint Committee,