**Wyoming School-University Partnership**

**Governing Board Meeting**

**Thursday, April 10, 2014**

University Union Building, Room 315

Casper College Campus, Wyoming 82601

Those in attendance included the following board members, guests, and staff.

***Governing board members:***

*Greg Brown (for Audrey Shalinsky) (UW, College of Arts & Sciences, associate dean), Jean Chrostoski (Goshen 1), Diana Clapp (Fremont 6), Dan Coe (Big Horn 2), Shon Hocker (Big Horn 1), Paige Fenton Hughes (Wyoming Department of Education), Mark Mathern (Natrona 1), Kathy Vetter (Wyoming Education Association, president), and John Weigel (Converse 1).*

***Guests:***

*Leslie Capps (Wyoming Humanities Council, associate director), Brent Picket (UW-Casper, associate dean and director), and Shannon Smith (Wyoming Humanities Council, executive director).*

***Staff:***

*Audrey Kleinsasser and Beth Wiley.*

Diana Clapp called the meeting to order at 10:05 a.m. She welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked everyone to introduce themselves. Special guests included Shannon Smith and Leslie Capps from the Wyoming Humanities Council, Brent Pickett, the University of Wyoming at Casper, and Greg Brown, an associate dean of the UW College of Arts & Sciences, who was there in lieu of Audrey Shalinsky.

Diana asked Audrey Kleinsasser to present the meeting agenda and supporting materials which included the financial report, the January 29 meeting minutes, and the director’s report. Audrey K. briefly explained each item. Paige Fenton Hughes moved to approve the agenda and related consent agenda items. Kathy Vetter seconded the motion. There was no further discussion. The motion was approved.

Audrey introduced Brent Pickett, associate dean and director, University of Wyoming at Casper, as well as a political science scholar. Brent led the grounding discussion about *Heal Up and Hair Over: A Wyoming Civility Reader* published by the Wyoming Humanities Council. Brent welcomed everyone to the new University Union Building which houses the University of Wyoming at Casper. He began the grounding discussion by cautioning that civility is one concept among many that are important within our democracy. Brent personally defined civility as how we embody and communicate respect to other people. With that definition, the context of any interaction is important. Culture can change the way we think of what is civil.

Brent argued that all citizens have a duty to foster thick skins. We shouldn’t assume the worst of the person who is speaking, but be willing to give anyone the benefit of the doubt. Simply becoming offended and disengaging doesn’t work. Breeding civility will result in uncomfortable conversations, but we have to be willing to engage in those conversations. Brent was curious if there were public forums in Wyoming communities where people could engage in civil discourse.

Shannon Smith responded by explaining that creating those spaces is one of the missions of the Wyoming Humanities Council. *Heal Up and Hair Over* came out of larger initiative called Civility Matters that was funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities. The purpose of the reader is to provide a community catalyst to build forums for conversations about issues – educational and otherwise. The council would like to see the reader used to spark conversations in school systems, Rotary and other clubs, and other public and private spaces.

Dan Coe responded that because of the rural nature of Wyoming the forums tend to be more informal, such as personal phone calls or meetings with concerned parents. Diana commented that she feels the media influences how people think about civility. Critical thinking is important to teach because students need to learn how to analyze their sources of information. Dan pointed out that social media can often be uncivil. Paige added that social media also often has misinformation. Paige stated she wonders if our educational system teaches students the skills to be civil. Even within the legislature, there are recent examples were representatives berated each other through a public letter. Paige asked how we could disagree without being disrespectful to each other.

Diana and Brent affirmed that fear can be a driving factor in being uncivil. Brent added that a degree of emotional self-control is needed to be civil. We have to be able to step back from our initial emotional, defensive response. John Weigel agreed, and used an example of a parent group against the Common Core State Standards who came to him with fears about what might happen in the future.

Greg Brown and Paige questioned whether the culture sometimes encouraged incivility by rewarding it. Audrey also commented that University of Wyoming students, typically respectful and polite to their elders, can often have an aversion to disagreeing with someone in authority, like a professor. Jean Chrostoski and Diana agreed that fear of retribution, such as receiving a bad grade, can keep students from risking disagreement. Brent responded that we need to cultivate a trust in the ideas of due process. We have to be able to trust each other to engage in civility.

Dan argued we have to teach that with rights come responsibilities, one of which is dealing with each other civilly. Diana concurred, adding that we can’t give in to those who aren’t civil and promote their behavior. We also need to be careful not to belittle others with our own behavior. Greg advocated leading by example. Leslie commented that we need to create a society that gives individuals self-assurance that they can navigate an uncomfortable situation without being uncivil. A big way to do that is to let everyone be heard. Audrey reminded the board that this is one important feature of the Partnership’s Lost in Transition initiative.

Brent wrapped up the discussion by affirming that civility needs to be cultivated. In the *Federalist Papers*, our founding fathers advocated a society where we make decisions based on informed discussions by reason, not intimidation and force.

Diana thanked Brent, Shannon, and Leslie. Shannon mentioned that if any board members would like more copies of the reader, they can contact Shannon or Leslie. For more information, board members could visit [www.thinkwy.org](http://www.thinkwy.org).

Diana asked Paige to provide the board members with information about what was happening concerning the Next Generation Science Standards. Paige explained the legislative amendment didn’t allow the state board to discuss or fund the Next Generation Science Standards or similar standards. Audrey asked whether there was anything the Partnership should or could do. Paige asked those present to provide her with any comments or feedback for the Friday, April 11, state board meeting.

Greg mentioned that the university was planning to create an official statement. Students at a university can’t be selectively trained or they won’t graduate prepared to compete in a global economy. In addition, they need to come to the university with the proper training, as well.

Diana commented that the teachers in her district who had been involved in assessing the standards felt disrespected for their years of work. Paige agreed. Mark Mathern suggested the possibility of asking for a public debate over specific standards. John suggested we remind parents that they have some measure of control already. In his district, parents can opt their students out of units if they wish.

Paige thanked those present for their input. There was a brief break for lunch.

Diana reconvened after lunch. She asked Audrey to explain the Partnership proposed budget for the 2014-2015 fiscal year. Audrey mentioned that this budget is contingent on keeping our current membership and convincing a few new members to join. The Professional Teaching Standards Board is one organization the executive committee would like to approach. Dan thought that was a great idea and also advocated inviting the Community College Commission as a formal member again.

Diana asked if each community college has a chance for representation. Audrey responded that Dee Ludwig is currently the voting member who represents the community colleges.

Audrey explained that the Partnership was able to change the Partnership Office Associate position from three-quarter time to full time during the 2013-2014 fiscal year. For 2014-2015, the Partnership will work with the UW College of Education to change the job title from “Office Associate” to “Project Coordinator” to more accurately reflect the position. However, this is contingent on funding and success in working with Human Resources at the University of Wyoming to approve the change.

Diana pointed out that the state was going to have a large number of new superintendents this year and she was hoping the current Partnership members could help her recruit new districts. Dan suggested having a presence at the Wyoming Association of School Administrators (WASA) conferences and the Wyoming School Board Association (WSBA) conferences. Audrey confirmed that perhaps asking Partnership members to speak at WASA regional meetings could help inform non-member districts about the benefits of the Partnership.

Dan Coe moved that the 2014-2015 budget be approved as presented and that members cast their ballots by an email vote since there was not a quorum present. Kathy Vetter seconded the motion. There was no further discussion. The motion was approved.\*

Diana gave everyone time to look over the Wyoming School-University Partnership Goals for 2015-2020 that were shared with the UW College of Education Advisory Board. Mark asked if these goals were carried over from 2010-2015 goals. Audrey responded that these goals are a continuation, but also an addition. She explained UW is currently working on its fourth strategic plan. One focus is measurable goals and accountability. These Partnership goals are a draft document that ultimately will be part of the university’s strategic plan.

Diana suggested that perhaps the Partnership was an established organization in the state that could take on other responsibilities around bringing together those in the K-20 (kindergarten through graduate school) educational community. Mark agreed and would like to add another goal that states the Partnership is open to facilitating statewide educational initiatives. Kathy suggested wording that the Partnership is not just willing, but strongly encourages statewide, cross level educational connections. Audrey said that the executive committee and Partnership staff would rework the document and bring the revised version back to the governing board during the July 9 meeting.

Greg noted that UW’s Life Sciences Program was selected to be one of eight colleges and universities from a pool of 70 across the U.S. to pilot the Partnership for Undergraduate Life Sciences Education Vision and Change certification process. At the national meeting attended by Greg, Mark Lyford, and Brianna Wright of UW’s Life Science Program, other colleges and universities were very impressed with the reports about the Life Sciences Lost in Transition Summit. No other state brings educators across levels together the way Wyoming does. The Lost in Transition meetings are elevating UW’s Life Sciences Program to a top tier program in the nation.

Kathy informed the group that she received a grant for $263,000 for training Wyoming teachers in accountability measures. A team is heading to Minneapolis for a conference that will help them decide which professional group the Wyoming Education Association (WEA) will bring to Wyoming to train the trainers. The grant will last for the next three years, and she is hopeful that the Partnership will help the WEA advertise to schools and districts. Audrey asked Kathy to report out about the WEA’s progress at the July 9 meeting.

Audrey covered other Partnership updates and reports included in the governing board packet. Lost in Transition meetings in life sciences and mathematics were a success this year. Teaching Writing in Wyoming was scheduled for April 13-14 in Rock Springs. Diana added that more information about these meetings and the Partnership can be found on the website, [www.uwyo.edu/wsup](http://www.uwyo.edu/wsup). She reminded those in attendance to direct potential members to the Partnership website if they want more information about the Partnership, specifically benefits to teachers.

Diana requested everyone complete a meeting evaluation form (transcribed comments appear below) and adjourned the meeting at 1:45 p.m.

Minutes prepared by Beth Wiley, April 15, 2014.

\*In response to an email sent on April 11, 2014, there was a unanimous majority vote by governing board members to accept the 2014-2015 fiscal year budget as proposed at the April 10 meeting.

**Wyoming School-University Partnership**

**Governing Board Meeting Evaluation Form**

**April 10, 2014**

*Session feedback transcribed April 16, 2014 n = 9 responses*

*All responses from evaluation forms were transcribed exactly as written.*

*Not all respondents answered all questions.*

1. **What insights or reactions did you have from the discussion about civility with Brent Pickett?**

* I missed the discussion, but enjoyed the book. I plan to use it in our district.
* This was a great discussion. It is something that can be used with most boards or groups.
* Great conversation validating the need for continued civility in our work within and outside the district.
* Civility parallels listening – when both parties listen with the intent of understanding – civility occurs.
* Important to set the ground rules to teach civility when hot topics come up within meetings.
* Positive, interesting discussion. Civility & high quality education, at any level, go hand-in-hand.
* Although a bit skeptical of where the reading might take us, Brent did an excellent job and it was valuable discussion.
* A conversation that needs to be had – Brent was very prepared – was a valuable conversation. This might be worth follow-up at subsequent meetings – more reading – more talking.
* One of the best readings for a grounding that I think we have had. Brent’s lead in was excellent. It was fun to observe his controlled “enthusiasm” for the topic – still leaked through & that was fun.

1. **Do you have any plans to use the Wyoming Humanities Council’s civility reader, *Heal Up and Hair Over*, with your principals, your school board, or other stakeholders in your district? If so, who will you share it with?**

* BOCES
* I hope to use it with my board.
* Yes. A book study in a PLC format with my board and admin team.
* Yes – all of the above.
* I think it would be a good resource for one of our admin meetings.
* Probably, colleagues.
* I believe it would make a good rotary program. I also think it would be a good book study for Board Members, principals, & staff.
* I have copies for every state board member to share at tomorrow’s meeting . . . might be particularly pertinent. ☺ I think we should share it during our first IEC/SBE discussion about our joint interim topic.
* Yes. It will be the next professional reading for my admin team & I would like 7 more copies for my school board.

1. **At this meeting, we approved the Partnership’s 2014-2015 budget. One goal we have is to increase school district membership around the state. Why do you think it’s important for your district to belong to the Partnership? Would you be willing to talk to a superintendent whose school district is not a member?**

* We are the only real voice for K-Grad school in Wyoming.
* I think membership in the Partnership is important as a means of promoting life long learning and PD in a statewide basis to help all of us deal with educational issues.
* Importance – This partnership creates a very special venue to link PK-12 with the colleges & University. No better way I’m aware of. Yes – I am currently talking with Jon Abrams of Lincoln County SC #2. He is close to joining!
* I think it is great professional development for me personally, but the lost in transitions are worth the price alone.
* Improve the transition from public school to both college & university.
* The partnership is important to educators in general. We need our students prepared and this is the only way to work collaboratively to assure that we are preparing students to be career & college ready.
* Only org. that directly works on articulation with both community colleges & the university & K-12. Different kinds of focus for the meetings – professional growth. If our state’s goal is to have every student college/career ready, this is the only org. that is a player right now.
* Renewal & discussion around “public” education & the foundational principles of NNER. Weston – Byron Stutzman & Brad Lacroix; Upton – Summer Stephens; Fremont – Gerry Nolan, Tammy Cox, Terry Ebert

1. **Reactions, suggestions, recommendations, or anything else you’d like meeting planners to know?**

* I like where the goals are going.
* Great job. Thanks.
* Great selection of the “reader.” Thanks much.
* I look forward to these meetings! Thanks.
* Nice meeting space!
* Maybe rotate the selected readings by members. I do like the idea. Great lunch discussion. Beautiful location.
* Love the new location! Good food. ☺ As always, superb preparation! Thanks!