**Wyoming School-University Partnership**

**Governing Board Meeting**

**Wednesday, April 29, 2015**

**10:00 a.m. – 1:25 p.m.**

Casper College Student Union/University of Wyoming, Room 322

Casper, Wyoming 82601

**In Attendance**

­Governing Board Members

Andrea Bryant (Executive Director, Wyoming Professional Teaching Standards Board), Michael Day (Interim Dean, UW College of Education), Donna Field (Curriculum Director, Goshen 1, attending for Jean Chrostoski), Dennis Fischer (Superintendent, Platte 1, by conference call), Kathy Hitt (Interim Superintendent, Fremont 1, by conference call) Shon Hocker (Superintendent, Big Horn 1), Dee Ludwig, (Vice President for Instruction, Eastern Wyoming College, by conference call), Paula Lutz (Dean, UW College of Arts and Sciences, by conference call), David Nicholas (Superintendent, Washakie 1), Leslie Rush (Associate Dean, UW College of Education), Audrey Shalinsky (Associate Dean UW College of Arts and Sciences), Ray Schulte (Superintendent, Park 6), Tracey Stibbitz (Wyoming Department of Education, by conference call), Walt Wilcox (Curriculum Director, Natrona 1), Rick Woodford (Superintendent, Big Horn 2).

­­Guests

Ami Erickson (Division Head, Northern Wyoming Community College District), Joe McCann (Program Team Manager, Wyoming Community College Commission), Brent Pickett (Professor of Political Science, UW-Casper), Tracy Ragland (Principal, Weston 1, Vice-President of the Wyoming Professional Teaching Standards Board), Ray Reutzel (Dean Designate, UW College of Education, by conference call), Jim Rose (Executive Director, Wyoming Community College Commission, by conference call).

Staff

Audrey Kleinsasser, Director

Audrey Shalinsky, executive committee member, convened the meeting in the absence of Chair Diana Clapp. Audrey S. welcomed all in attendance and asked each to share his or her name and position. She then asked Dean Paula Lutz, who chaired the College of Education dean search committee, to introduce Dean Designate Ray Reutzel, who joined us via conference call from Logan, Utah. Paula described the search and UW’s selection of the person who was, “head and shoulders above the other candidates.” In large measure, that was due to his presenting a draft plan to address the UW Board of Trustees’ educational initiative designed to steer to the college to national preeminence. Paula predicted that Ray “will do a good job steering that ship.”

Dr. Reutzel then addressed the group, confirming, “I am so thrilled about this opportunity and more excited by the day. I appreciate the time today. It’s coming home for us.” A Wyoming native and College of Education graduate, Dr. Reutzel understands the Wyoming context very well. He explained that he is a long time public school partnership supporter and was, in fact, the architect of the Brigham Young University School University Partnership, working closely with John Goodlad. With deep roots in partnering, Dr. Reutzel has been a school teacher in Wyoming and Utah. Said Reutzel, “I love the classroom. Literacy is my passion so I’m excited about the new literacy center at UW.”

Audrey S. then asked if anyone had questions or comments. Having been on the WEN video sessions during candidate interviews, Andrea asked Dr. Reutzel to talk a little about his vision for the education initiative and the UW Board of Trustees’ charge to bring the college to national preeminence. Dr. Reutzel described a trifold leaflet featuring a four pillared building, large foundation, and a capstone. Said Reutzel, “I feel like I’m coming in as the capstone (to the University Trustee resolution). What is preeminent status? In such a college, the preparation of educators is renowned, recognized, and ranked, with metrics to do the measuring. That is the first pillar. The second pillar is a college connected to its community and its context, K12, community college, legislators, all stake holders. At the same time, internal connections must be honored, for example, and the College of Arts and Sciences and the College of Engineering. The third pillar is to be impactful. “I’m big on the idea we have to make an impact, we can’t just exist. This speaks to practices and outcomes,” explained Reutzel. Finally, the fourth pillar is being distinctive, a few things that really set us apart. For example, that might be the new literacy center, maybe STEM initiatives, the Science and Mathematics Teaching Center, and, of course, wonderful opportunities with the state office of education. In the center of the trifold was a SWOT analysis, where Dr. Reutzel would start internally, then vet with external stakeholders. (SWOT is an acronym for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.) Dr. Reutzel explained that a SWOT would enable him to learn what’s been going on. The final component of the trifold explicated Dr. Reutzel’s leadership commitment: collaborating, telling the truth, gaining trust, and being passionate. Dr. Reutzel will be moving from Logan, aiming for a July 6 official start date. Audrey S. thanked Dean Designate Reutzel for this time and affirmed, “We all care about the College of Education.”

Audrey S. then asked for a motion to approve the consent agenda. Andrea made the motion and Shon seconded.

The next order of business was to approve the 2015-2016 budget. Before that action, Rick asked that the board to study the current dues structure and, perhaps, consider a tiered membership. Following discussion, Rick moved to study the Partnership dues structure in the coming year and report findings and recommendations to the governing board prior to decisions about the 2016-2017 budget year. Shon seconded the motion.

A second motion followed by Ray to approve the 2015-2016 budget as presented. David seconded the motion. There was no discussion.

Note: As governing board members in attendance represented two votes shy of quorum, Audrey K. alerted all voting board members by email the next day and collected their votes on both motions. A quorum was thus achieved with all votes on both motions cast a yes.

Audrey S. then asked Audrey K. to overview plans for the June 25 Wyoming Renewal Conference with the June 26-29 NNER Summer Symposium following. Audrey K. distributed a draft flyer with information that would be broadly distributed, including the online registration site. The governing board offered suggestions about obtaining copies of Robert Putnam’s *Our Kids: The American Dream in Crisis*. Michael suggested alerting Lesley Boughton at the Wyoming State Library, which Audrey K. will do. Andrea urged everyone involved in summer conferences or events such as this one to take advantage of PTSB renewal credit, along with the board’s informative to website highlight professional development opportunities.

Additional updates included a flyer for the July 30-31 UW Law Institute, also in Laramie, adding to items for information included in the board packet. Dean Paula Lutz then talked through a one-page summary of the six-month process to select a College of Education dean. Andrea noted the importance of the four public forums occurring via the state’s WEN system. Joe McCann alerted the board about a regionally sponsored grant proposal to the U.S. Department of Education which would support university efforts to provide courses for faculty not qualified to teach concurrent enrollment and provide support for high school faculty members to pursue a degree or credits in a discipline. That grant was submitted April 13 with Wyoming in the regional consortium. If successful, we’ll hear about the grant by mid- or late-June. A strong benefit of the consortium is the creation of a larger teacher cohort. Right now, one of UW’s problems in offering graduate courses for high school faculty is the number of students who enroll in a graduate course is too small; it does not make the minimum requirement for a UW course. Andrea noted that courses in science and mathematics were especially critical.

At 12 noon, those in attendance broke for lunch while members on the conference call stayed on the line. When the onsite group reassembled at 12:25 p.m., Audrey S. introduced UW political science professor Brent Pickett. Brent is well known to Partnership members having led a number of NNER and Partnership grounding discussions over the years, most recently a 2014 discussion from selected excerpts of *Heal Up and Hair Over*, a civility reader produced by the Wyoming Humanities Council. Brent is based at UW’s Casper center. Today’s grounding was a focus was a ten-page excerpt from *Our Kids: The American Dream in Crisis* by Robert D. Putnam. The excerpt about the power of extracurricular activities to hone soft skills came from a longer chapter entitled “Schooling.” Brent opened the conversation by asking how much Putnam’s descriptions ring true for Wyoming and Wyoming schools. Walt responded immediately explaining that an advanced learner in Casper seemed to be coming to school with more and more in his or her favor. When that is the case, those in schools have to be careful about inappropriate tracking.

Rick affirmed that kids come to schools and to their teachers with particular abilities and backgrounds. In that context, schools do serve as an equalizer, particularly in regard to extracurricular activities for which his district does not charge. Kathy Hitt was on the conference call and added that students in Fremont 1 (Lander), do have to pay to play, $25 for four sports. Andrea added that she just heard a radio news report that the Wyoming High School Activities Association would be discussing the way activities were funded. Shon, current president of the organization, confirmed that while there may be a cut in support to districts, everyone believes in the importance of the activities in students’ lives. Joe raised the issue of transportation. Tracy Ragland explained that he was on the board during the last recalibration of funding. He said that all of the mileage reports were displayed with considerable fanfare in the *Casper Star Tribune*, our statewide newspaper. He reminded us, “Dealing with the funding model doesn’t make the trip shorter. It’s a big state and there aren’t that many schools.” None the less, participation rates in Wyoming schools are very high, in the 90% and better range.

Brent asked the group to consider the challenge of affluence; in affluent neighborhoods, parents might think about kids as being “our kids,” not necessarily all kids. He wondered if in Wyoming, all kids are “our kids.” Donna observed that in Goshen 1, with its three high schools, there’s definitely competition among the three. It has caused district leaders to focus more on county results, not school results. Shon added that he believed most districts and schools are doing very well in terms of opening opportunities for students. While small schools might not have all of the curricular opportunities (e.g., multiple modern languages), the districts find ways to be creative, including online internet options for some courses. Andrea, a small town Wyoming native, observed that the classic small high school needs every single student in order to field a play, the band, let alone sports teams. Now, a parent of young children in one of Wyoming’s largest cities, she is seeing her two children specializing. Some club sports are a nine-month commitment, and this is for primary school-aged students!

Brent started to wrap up the discussion by taking the group to the final chapter of Putnam’s book and some recommendations. One of Putnam’s suggestions is that poor schools should be allocated more money. In Wyoming, such a solution would run counter to the funding model as, at least for now, performance is not taken into account. Brent wondered if policy makers might want to consider a funding model that arrives at equality of results. Another Putnam recommendation is more funding for academic guidance counselors, personnel who are greatly overwhelmed in some schools by the nature of student problems, including more discipline problems. Similarly, should teachers in the lowest performing schools, ones in which students have the fewest financial and family resources be paid more since the challenges are greater? Leslie Rush observed that such catch up, remedial, or support programs are enormously expensive. For example, at the University of Wyoming, with its nearly open admissions policy, students admitted with support (and others) are offered a range of tutoring programs as a means of assistance. The logistical and financial responsibilities for such programs are significant.

The concern voiced by Leslie led the group to discuss the importance of engagement and, in fact, the role of supportive adults (mentors, advisors, coaches) in the lives of children and youth. That caused Ami to wonder if the separation of academic (curricular) and extracurricular was less than helpful since one or the other is elevated. Joe reminded the group that preteens need to feel they are a part of something, citing the example of the Complete College Wyoming initiative. Research supports the proposition that students are more likely to complete if they have touchstone people around them. He offered nursing as a powerful example of cohort learning and support. Leslie observed that in the education fields there is not the same kind of feeling that “we all are in this together.” That caused Donna to share that teachers live and work in isolated classrooms. Bringing adults together for collaboration is a considerable challenge, given that history. Leslie agreed, noting that in student teaching, some of the best K12 teachers are not effective coaches. She added that traditionally aged students (in a student teaching context) have trouble imagining students different from themselves. Donna said that these contextual factors make teacher induction programs more important than ever. And in fact, such programs are becoming the norm, according to Rick. Walt added that school leaders need and want mentors as well and applauded UW’s efforts to establish a center for school leadership.

Brent wrapped up the discussion by thanking all and reminding the group that Putnam starts the book by taking readers into the lives of students and their families, and then moves out to the larger circle of schools, community, and society. Audrey S. thanked Brent for leading today’s grounding.

Audrey Shalinsky then thanked all for attending and their strong participation, especially today’s guests. She then reminded those in attendance to complete the feedback form and adjourned the meeting at 1:25 p.m.

Governing Board minutes prepared by Audrey Kleinsasser, May 1, 2015

**Wyoming School-University Partnership**

**Governing Board Meeting Evaluation Form**

**April 29, 2015**

No names or identifiers, please. Please write as legibly as possible. Thank you!

**N=9 responses**

1. Reactions, suggestions, recommendations, or anything else you’d like Partnership leadership and staff to know about today’s meeting?

* ***Appreciated the suggestion to revisit benefits and funding for school district membership in the Partnership.***
* ***Thank you for hosting Ray Reutzel. That was valuable. We look forward to meeting him in person. I’d love for the Board members to bring a colleague to our meetings similar to "bring your kid to work day.” I think this opportunity for renewal would be interesting.***
* ***I missed the round table when everyone was able to mention what is going on in their own area. I really enjoyed hearing from everyone last fall.***
* ***None.***
* ***I enjoyed today’s learning and reflection.***
* ***Well organized meeting.***
* ***Great potential for student teaching to be re-combined w/ the Partnership.***
* ***The meeting was great today!***

1. What insights or reactions did you have concerning the reading and discussion of Chapter 4 from *Our Kids: The American Dream in Crisis* by Robert D. Putnam?

* ***Enjoyed the reading and discussion especially through the Wyoming window.***
* ***It seems obvious that students in below average socio-economic groups would be less likely to participate in extracurricular activities, but I hadn't thought of the impact on their socio-economic futures.***
* ***It is great to hear what others are doing.***
* ***On target, timely & very relevant.***
* ***Reinforced the importance of a community of learners and soft skill development.***
* ***Amazing connections across levels.***
* ***The reading was very thought provoking on many levels.***

1. Planners for the June 25 Wyoming Symposium will use Putnam’s book and key ideas to spark discussion. What kinds of discussions or events about Putnam’s work would you see as useful to you and those in your organization?

* ***Application of discussion (2nd book) to Wyoming communities large & small.***
* ***Send out reading/discussion questions before the symposium.***
* ***I would like to read the entire book before I comment. I will say there are schools all over the U.S. closing the academic gap and it would be interesting to know what they are doing.***
* ***I am not in the state during this time.***
* ***N/A.***
* ***Today unsure, need to reflect.***
* ***How does this ring true for Wyoming? What next?***
* ***I believe you will see settings like the one you saw today.***
* ***Good to discuss how these principles apply to Wyoming schools and families.***

1. As Putnam’s *Our Kids* research and recommendations will provide part of the foundation for the Partnership’s June 25 summer symposium, we would like Partnership governing board members as involved as possible. Please identify possible roles. Also, if you know that you would like to participate as a panel discussion member or lead a small group discussion, please write your name on a 3x5 index card and share that with Audrey Kleinsasser before you leave today.

* ***You let me know where you need me.***
* ***Yes.***
* ***Done!***

1. One feature of the June 25 Partnership Symposium will be an invitation to pilot a small, local project based on Putnam’s research findings and recommendations. What suggestion or two would you give planners to make that call for proposals attractive and another good reason to come to Laramie, June 25?

* ***The uniqueness of so many Wyoming communities and school district support of extracurricular activities.***
* ***Specifics on what grants are for; not sure if it is for research or implementation of a trial activity.***
* ***I think that spreading the word will be beneficial. It might help if schools would be willing to pay for staff members’ books should they choose to come.***

*Meeting feedback collected and transcribed by Audrey Kleinsasser*

*April 30, 2015*