



WISCONSIN LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

BUILDING WISCONSIN'S WORKFORCE

Legislative Council Conference Room
Madison, Wisconsin

October 22, 2008
10:00 a.m. – 4:05 p.m.

[The following is a summary of the October 22, 2008 meeting of the Special Committee on Building Wisconsin's Workforce. The file copy of this summary has appended to it a copy of each document prepared for or submitted to the committee during the meeting. A digital recording of the meeting is available on our Web site at <http://www.legis.state.wi.us/lc>.]

Call to Order and Roll Call

Chair Strachota called the meeting to order. The roll was called and it was determined that a quorum was present.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: Rep. Pat Strachota, Chair; Sen. Robert Wirth, Vice Chair; Rep. Mark Honadel; and Public Members Jim Golembeski, John Keckhaver, Mark Kessenich, Steve Mercatis, Carol Wagenson, and Judy Warmuth.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS EXCUSED: Sens. Alberta Darling and Robert Jauch; Rep. Gordon Hintz; and Public Member Peter Thillman.

COUNCIL STAFF PRESENT: Scott Grosz and Jessica Karls, Staff Attorneys.

APPEARANCES: Deborah Mahaffey, Assistant State Superintendent, Division for Academic Excellence, Department of Public Instruction (DPI); Amy Sherman, Council for Adult and Experiential Learning; Jessica Tormey and Grant Huber, University of Wisconsin (UW) System; Conor Smyth and Annette Severson, Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS); and Paul Nelson, Wisconsin Association of Independent Colleges and Universities (WAICU).

Approval of the Minutes of the Committee's September 23, 2008 Meeting

Chair Strachota moved, seconded by Representative Honadel, that the minutes of the September 23, 2008 meeting be approved. The motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

Presentations by Invited Speaker

[Note: PowerPoint presentations and other documents referred to by the speakers are posted on the committee's Internet site.]

Deborah Mahaffey, Assistant State Superintendent, Division for Academic Excellence, DPI.

Ms. Mahaffey began her presentation with a summary of the 2009-11 budget requests that DPI submitted to the Governor. She explained that the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) program is the centerpiece of DPI's budget requests and that the budget requests include increased funding for physical capacity and programmatic grants and for the establishment of STEM academies. In addition, the budget requests include funding for Project Lead the Way. She described other initiatives that are part of DPI's budget requests, including: (1) a world language initiative for elementary schools; (2) international education; (3) advanced placement grants; and (4) support for gifted and talented students.

Ms. Mahaffey described DPI's efforts regarding mathematics. She explained that the American Diploma Project and Partnership for 21st Century Skills Leadership Team recommended that the standards for mathematics be upgraded and that alternative pathways for mathematics credits be provided. In particular, she noted that the team recommended three credits of math for a high school diploma. She also noted the efforts of the PK-16 Leadership Council, which is comprised of representatives from the UW System, WTCS, WAICU, DPI, business, and industry, regarding local coordination to meet employers' needs.

Ms. Mahaffey responded to questions from committee members. In her responses, she discussed the Education for Employment program, guidance counseling, and local collaboration. She commented on WLC: 0126/1, relating to requiring an additional credit of mathematics for a high school diploma. She indicated that most school districts require an additional credit of mathematics in high school and that DPI will continue to look for equivalent courses to satisfy mathematics credits. She also noted that an increase in the number of required mathematics credits may be considered an unfunded mandate and that the requirement should be phased-in over a longer period of time.

Discussion of Committee Assignment

Mr. Grosz explained that the Legislative Audit Bureau (LAB) has not prepared an audit of workforce development programs since 1994. He explained how a program audit differs from the annual financial audits prepared by the LAB. He described the process by which the committee could request an audit of workforce development programs through the Joint Committee on Audit. The committee could identify a specific topic within workforce development to audit, such as workforce training programs, and request an initial analysis, followed by a later comprehensive audit of all

workforce training programs. Ms. Karls noted that the request could be made by letter from the chair of the Special Committee to the co-chairs of the Joint Committee on Audit.

Chair Strachota noted that the audit could compare Wisconsin to other states and that former Governor Thompson used the 1994 audit to request more federal funds.

Senator Wirch indicated that the new federal administration may have new priorities regarding workforce development.

Mr. Keckhaver suggested that the audit could find programs where no benchmarks exist, which could help impact federal policy. He also noted that if the audit demonstrates that federal law limits flexibility in workforce development, that result may create changes in federal policy.

Ms. Wagenson asked whether programs related to the Workforce Investment Act and Wisconsin Works would be included in the audit.

Mr. Golembeski noted that the Public Policy Forum published a summary of workforce development programs.

Chair Strachota indicated that the LAB would get more recent information than the information contained in the Public Policy Forum publication.

Mr. Kessenich asked whether WTCS programs would be included in the audit.

Chair Strachota suggested that the audit could show what the state is doing with federal funds and could focus on a particular group of workers for the initial audit, which would then be rolled into a larger, more comprehensive audit.

Ms. Kessenich explained that dislocated workers are not the population of workers that need to be addressed in the audit.

Mr. Golembeski suggested that the committee focus on three areas: K-12, incumbent workers, and job seekers.

Presentations by Invited Speaker

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Amy Sherman, Council for Adult and Experiential Learning.

Ms. Sherman began her presentation with a description of the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning, which is a 501 (c) (3) non-profit, international organization headquartered in Chicago, Illinois. She described Wisconsin's challenge with educating working adults and barriers to education for adults, including the rising costs of tuition and fees. She noted that increased education leads to increased tax revenue, healthier citizens, and less crime. She indicated that more sustainable ways must be found to pay for adult learning.

Ms. Sherman described Lifelong Learning Accounts (LiLAs), which are employer-matched, portable, individual accounts used to finance employee training and education. She explained the key characteristics of LiLAs, including that LiLAs are sponsored by the employer, employer-matched, portable, incentivized through tax policy, universal, and voluntary. She described a demonstration of LiLAs in the Chicago restaurant industry and noted the preliminary outcomes from the demonstration, including a high level of program satisfaction. Ms. Sherman then highlighted regional and federal LiLA initiatives, describing in detail features of federal LiLA bills.

Ms. Sherman responded to questions from committee members. In her responses, she noted that tax incentives are important for employers; that LiLAs may be used for various expenses, including tuition, mandatory fees, and books; and that states can leverage current education programs to create more efficiency.

Discussion of Committee Assignment

Mr. Grosz explained the response received from the Department of Regulation and Licensing (DRL) concerning data collection for the professions that DRL licenses. Ms. Warmuth noted that because DRL communicates often with license holders, DRL is in the best position to collect data. Chair Strachota asked what other states have done regarding data collection for the workforce, and Ms. Warmuth indicated that she could provide that information.

Ms. Karls explained WLC: 0203/1, relating to an annual report to the Legislature regarding the transfer of credits between educational institutions. Chair Strachota invited Jessica Tormey and Grant Huber from the UW System, Conor Smyth and Annette Severson from WTCS, and Paul Nelson from WAICU to comment on the bill draft.

Ms. Tormey described an informational memorandum that the UW System has distributed to the Legislature for the past decade and asked the committee to review the memorandum to see what other information could be included. She indicated that the issue of credits not being accepted at educational institutions is not the problem and that the problem lies with retaining transfer students. She and Mr. Huber demonstrated the online Transfer Information System.

Ms. Severson indicated that the transfer of credits could improve for occupational credits. Mr. Nelson noted that independent colleges and universities have transfer articulation agreements with technical colleges and that WAICU will eventually be able to match the data collection efforts of the UW System.

Representative Honadel requested that the bill draft include a sunset provision. Chair Strachota recommended that Mr. Keckhaver work with Mr. Thillman and others on the specific information that should be included in the annual report.

Committee members then discussed WLC: 0126/1, relating to requiring an additional credit in mathematics for a high school diploma.

Chair Strachota noted that school districts and DPI will have to work together to address any teaching capacity issues that arise from an additional mathematics credit.

Representative Honadel indicated that DPI should decide which courses satisfy the third credit of mathematics.

Mr. Golembeski stated that the requirement forces school districts to find teachers.

Ms. Wagenson noted that some mathematics skills should be learned before high school.

Chair Strachota suggested that multiple pathways could be provided to obtain the three credits.

Mr. Kessenich expressed a concern that tutoring, applied programs, and work experience are being overlooked by the committee and that a requirement for three mathematics credits may not advance students to meet labor needs.

Mr. Keckhaver indicated that the committee should discuss guidance counseling.

Mr. Golembeski suggested that the committee ask whether the third credit of mathematics benefits the majority of students.

Mr. Kessenich stated that high school graduates should have the courses necessary for admission to the UW System. Mr. Golembeski added that graduates should have the courses necessary for admission to WTCS.

Following the discussion of the bill drafts, the committee continued discussion of Memo No. 1, *Potential Recommendations Submitted for Consideration by Committee Members*. Chair Strachota guided the committee through discussion of options related to incumbent workers, unemployed and underemployed workers, and long-term care workers.

Other Business

There was no other business brought before the committee.

Plans for Future Meetings

The next meeting of the Special Committee will be ***Wednesday, November 19, 2008, at 10:00 a.m., in the Legislative Council Conference Room, One East Main Street, Suite 401, Madison***. The committee has tentatively scheduled a subsequent meeting for Tuesday, December 9, 2008, at 10:00 a.m., in the Legislative Council Conference Room.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 4:05 p.m.

JK:ksm