

**Delaware College Access Network  
(DECAN)  
Meeting Notes for September 23, 2009  
Cabinet Room, Townsend Building**

**Welcome/Introductions**

Dr. Joseph Pika, Chair of DECAN, welcomed committee members and asked for a round of introductions. He then spoke of DECAN's dual goals of increasing the number of Delaware students attending college and of increasing the number of students successfully completing college. He connected these long standing goals of the subcommittee to President Obama's goal of the United States once again leading the world in the percent of the population holding a college degree by 2020. He further stated that the goals fit nicely into the scope of work outlined in the draft DOE strategic plan still under development.

Dr. Pika told the committee that the Chairs of the various P-20 Subcommittees were invited to the August meeting of the P-20 Council to be part of the strategic planning for the P-20 Council. At that meeting, the work of the DECAN subcommittee was given the continued support of the Council and the DOE.

Three DECAN Subcommittee members were selected to be part of a Delaware Team that attended the American Diploma Project Conference sponsored by Achieve, Inc. (Dr. Pika, Dr. Whittaker and Dr. Coffield). A key message throughout the conference was the need for clearly articulated linkages between K-12 and college entrance requirements. Dr. Pika further stated that he believed the DECAN Subcommittee was a useful framework that could play a facilitative role in discussions and future work with the institutions of higher education.

**College Access Challenge Grant (CACG)**

Dr. Susan Haberstroh provided a brief overview of the goals of the CACG grant. The goals are:

1. To increase students' and families' knowledge of high school requirements and opportunities that lead to success in college and the workplace.
2. To make Student Success Plans an integral part of the middle and high school experience.
3. To enhance guidance counselors' knowledge of and ability to perform academic advisement activities related to applying for college.

This grant is a two year grant. Year 1 began in August 2008 and ended in August 2009. We are now in Year 2 of the grant which begins August 2009 and ends in August 2010.

Goal one is being addressed through the following strategies as outlined in the grant:

- a) Enhance the Yes You Can website to serve as the portal through which Delaware students can access all college and financial aid information.

- b) Support the continuation of the Reaching Higher for Student Success communication campaign through maintenance of the Yes You Can website.
- c) Produce and distribute promotional materials that direct students and families to the Yes You Can website.
- d) Develop and pilot a web-based application to catalog high school-to-college and college-to-college course transfer information and expedite the course review processes among Delaware's institutions of higher education.

Goal two is being addressed through the following strategies:

- a) Develop and expand trainings on the use and application of Student Success Plans.
- b) Maintain and promote the use of Student Success Plans.
- c) Develop and pilot a graduate follow-up survey.

Goal three includes the following strategies:

- a) Develop in collaboration with SREB and other states, course modules for guidance counselors on the intricacies of advising college bound students.
- b) Facilitate a professional development conference for guidance counselor-led high school teams and in-state higher education officials in financial aid, admissions, and academic advisement. This is a project DECAN can sponsor.

With funds from this grant Delaware has participated in a six state collaborative to develop three training modules for guidance counselors that focus on helping low income families to understand the path to college and the information and resources that are available. The modules will be available online and there will also be an option for graduate credit through Wilmington University.

Some of the grant activities were funded through other sources resulting in the availability of some money that could be repurposed as long as it is aligned with the overall goals of the grant. It is hoped that by submitting a waiver to the grant funders, Delaware will be able to use CACG dollars to support the three county pilot of the Tier III outreach to district pairs of middle and high schools that was developed by DECAN over the past year. The REL used several indicators in our data warehouse coupled with GIS software to determine where the "cold spots" for college going were located in the state. Districts were selected to be invited to join the pilot based upon this analysis. The intent of the pilots is to develop experience and expertise regarding strategies focused on increasing college going and to create something that would be able to be scaled up statewide.

A second project related to the CACG grant that aligns with the work of the DECAN subcommittee is a conference that was conceived to bring together guidance counselor led high school teams and financial aid officers and admissions officers from higher education. The goal of the conference is to inform high school personnel what is required for admission and success in credit bearing college courses and to address barriers and potential solutions to college access. The conference must occur by the end of the grant period on August 30, 2010. A late spring or early summer date is being considered. Dr.

Pika has had preliminary conversations with Dr. Harry Williams, Provost at Delaware State University (DSU), about hosting the conference on the DSU campus. Dr. Williams was amenable to hosting the event. It was suggested that a subcommittee of DECAN lead the planning and implementation of the conference. Dennis Rozumalski, Dr. Susan Haberstroh and Dr. Judi Coffield will work with the higher education subcommittee and the representatives from the Regional Education Lab (REL), Mid-Atlantic Equity Center (MAEC), Mid-Atlantic Comprehensive Center (MACC) and American Education Services Success (AESS) in the planning process. Anyone interested in joining in the planning is asked to contact Dr. Coffield.

Barbara Hicks from the MAEC and the MACC and Jennifer Bausmith and Frank Livoy from the REL, and Reginald Irvis from AES were asked whether the organizations they represent would be able to support either project by 1) providing professional development or a toolkit of research based resources for the Community Based Organizations and schools/districts to use in the pilot project or 2) providing support for the conference in terms of speakers, workshops, or other resources. All present were interested and found value in the two proposed projects. They will each bring proposals back to their respective organizations to determine the possibility of providing support for either project.

### **Delaware Comprehensive Assessment System (DCAS)**

Dr. Nancy Wilson, Associate Secretary Curriculum and Instructional Support, provided an overview of the new student assessment. The RFP for the new assessment was released on September 21<sup>st</sup> with a deadline for submissions on October 21<sup>st</sup>. The new assessment will be web based with a paper and pencil version available for accommodations and as a back up in the event of technical difficulties. The assessment will have a summative component as we currently have that will be used for accountability purposes. The summative assessment in grades 3 – 8 will be adaptive within grade level. The high school assessment will consist of end of course exams (with some limited use in middle school). Fixed form end of course exams will be available for 2010-2011 school year in English II, Algebra I and Integrated Mathematics I, and Biology. US History is to be available in the 2011-2012 school year. The goal is to move toward adaptive end of course exams in the future. The end of course assessments will be immediately e-scoreable with written extended response items that will be scored locally with state rubrics. End of course assessments will provide common expectations across all Delaware districts and charter schools.

The assessment will also include benchmark assessments, a formative piece, designed to inform day-to-day instruction that will be adaptive beyond grade level. The RFP requires that final reports be returned within a week of administering the assessment. Benchmarks must be given at least two times per year under current state law, the first to be administered within 30 days of the start of school. RFP requested the ability to administer three such assessments.

The RFP does not include a stand-alone writing assessment. There will be a second proposal or agreement with other states for a separate writing assessment. A model such as the one currently being used in West Virginia (Book It) utilizes artificial intelligence scoring and has been found to provide highly reliable scoring.

Science, Social Studies and Writing will each be assessed one time in elementary and one time in middle school. The current proposal is that Science be tested in grades 5 and 8, Social Studies be tested in grades 4 and 7, and Writing be tested in grades 3 and 6.

Field testing of the DCAS will occur in the second part of this school year for full implementation in 2010-2011. It is likely that the implementation will take a phase-in approach.

A question was posed whether all schools were equipped to deliver the online test. Dr. Wilson stated that most schools were ready, but confirmed that there was still work to be done. Two issues to be considered are hardware and bandwidth/connectivity. There are some elementary schools and charter schools who are still on TSL lines. An adaptive assessment requires back and forth traffic between the computer and the server. The Department is working with the Department of Technology and Information (DTI) to develop solutions. One potential solution is to limit the use of bandwidth during testing windows. Another question was posed whether the paper and pencil version of the exam would not lose the adaptive nature of the assessment. There will be multiple forms of the paper and pencil version.

### **Common Core Standards Project**

Dr. Nancy Wilson provided an overview of the Common Core Standards Project. Forty-nine states and territories have now signed on to the development of Common Core Standards. This project is being co-led by Governor Sonny Perdue of Georgia and Delaware Governor Jack Markell. Three key features of the standards project are that they will meet expectations for College and Career Readiness, the Standards in K-12 will be developed in English language arts and mathematics with states adopting a minimum of 85% of their standards comprised from the Common Core and the standards will be internationally benchmarked. The College Board, ACT and Achieve are all involved in this project.

Delaware is leading an Item Bank Collaborative where several states will be joining efforts for development and sharing of items. An adaptive assessment requires a significantly larger item bank than does a static assessment. This collaborative effort will be cost efficient and will be a great resource in the development of high quality, rigorous items.

**Discussion regarding the implications of DCAS and Common Core Standards for DECAN work**

Dr. Pika led the group in a discussion regarding potential impact of the DCAS and Common Core Standards for the work of the DECAN. He suggested that DECAN or the larger P-20 Council could facilitate conversations that should engage the higher education institutions in this work. Conversations among DOE, higher eds and K-12 representatives need to explore the implications of these changes. Two such areas are college remediation and college admissions. There may be adjustments required based upon the common core standards and it remains to be seen if the adjustments would be minor or major. DECAN could also play a role in conversations involving the schools of education in the higher education institutions. There is likely to be an impact on teacher preparation programs resulting from one or both projects.

Dr. Susan Bunting, Superintendent of Indian River School District, spoke about a Prioritizing the Curriculum effort led by the superintendents from across the state. The project utilizes Max Thompson's Learning Focused Schools (LFS) strategies. Districts are collaborating to identify the power standards with the Delaware Content Standards in the four core content areas and further developing a prioritized list and timeline. Dr. Bunting described LFS strategies as a simplified version of Understanding by Design. Acquisition lessons begin with an essential question and incorporate activation strategies before moving into the active teaching and close with a summary. Teachers then move on to Extending and Refining lessons. Unit development is planned for the summer of 2010. Dr. Bunting stated that a major benefit of this work was the development and use of a common language regarding instruction.

**Wrap Up**

Dr. Pika summarized that DECAN was considering two projects: an outreach/communications project in three districts with pairs of middle schools and high schools and a conference that was written into the CACG grant. The pilot project must have Dr. Lowery's approval before moving forward and contacting district superintendents. Conference planning is ready to move forward. Dennis Rozumalski, Dr. Susan Haberstroh and Dr. Judi Coffield will pull together a subcommittee to begin the planning and logistics work necessary.

An email will be sent at a later date to schedule the next meeting of the DECAN Subcommittee in the November timeframe.