

Minutes
CareerSource Northeast Florida Executive Committee Meeting
March 24, 2021

A meeting of the FCWD, Inc., Executive Committee meeting was called to order by Chair Elaine Johnson via ZOOM on Wednesday, March 24, 2021, at 9:00 a.m. The following members participated, representing a quorum:

Elaine Johnson	Eda Edgerton
Clay Lyons	Jake Schickel
Dr. Joe Pickens	Wayne McClain

Excused: Darryl Register

Staff: Bruce Ferguson, Rebecca Livingston, Cheryl Taylor, Jay Loy, Steven Dionisio, Dianna Davis, Melissa Terbrueggen, Ron Whittington and Diane Nevison

Others: Dr. Anna Lebesch (JAXUSA)

Public Comment: None.

***Approval of Minutes**

Motion made by Wayne McClain and seconded by Dr. Joe Pickens to move approval the December 2, 2020 Executive Committee minutes as presented; motion unanimously carried.

Operations Update

January Employment Statistics: Regional unemployment was 4.5% in January 2021 versus 3.3% in December 2020. Some of it is driven by low labor force participation, stimulus payments and the additional \$300 in Federal unemployment payments. We are following it closely. The picture is much brighter with Florida at 5.3%, our region at 4.5% and the U.S. average of 6.8%. Good stories to tell in NEFL.

Employment stats still have leisure and hospitality with the highest job losses in our region and in the state. Our region is doing good in financial activities with a 2.4% change from January 2020 to January 2021.

All of Florida's major metro rate employment stats continue to do good with Jacksonville at 4.5% and Miami/Dade at 7.9%. The state is in recovery and it is reflected in these rates.

Operational Update: New job orders over a wide range of industries have increased in the Employ Florida system. December 2020 had 1,685, January 2,352, and February 2,529. The numbers are close to the January 2020 number of 2,848.

Regional Career Center Visit Comparisons are still slow and rising slowly and are down 45% from this time last year. As more people vaccinate, hopefully those numbers will increase. We are watching to see the effects of stimulus payments and the increase in unemployment benefits.

Chair Question: In terms of our visioning work and alternative ways to deliver service, are virtual visits better than walk-in (brick and mortar)? **Reply:** No, those numbers are also low averaging 8 scheduled appointments per day with only 3-5 occurring; it has been like this since last August. Several members commented the same is happening in their counties. Stimulus payments along with increased unemployment benefits come out to about \$15 per hour (the amount it takes to make a job worthwhile)

and people in lower paying jobs (custodial, maintenance, retail, etc.) would rather sit home. The Florida work search requirement for unemployment is still in place through the end of April.

The Chair asked if there were any other comments on the behavior of the workforce and the impact of government funding on workforce motivation?

Bruce Ferguson stated CSNEFL continues to struggle to get people into training, which is impacting our 10% administrative limit. This is a state issue and workforce development Executive Directors are talking amongst themselves to solve that problem.

Dr. Pickens stated another issue is we do not know where students are. They are missing. They are not working or going to school even when the government pays them to go (Pell Grants). SJRSC is down 8% for the year and the Florida College System more than that. The biggest percentage of missing students is recent high school graduates which is worrisome because they will not be math ready for college credit when they do decide to go to college. We believe they are sitting home waiting for a check. Historically, during a recession, enrollment grows 10-15% but instead has decreased 8-10%. The Chair concurred. The same is happening with incoming freshman at the Coggan College of Business at UNF. Dr. Pickens stated they are trying to convince the legislature, but they are not understanding it. We are worried about educating and training Florida and where we will be in a couple years as we emerge and the success rates for our students are low. Most seniors missed their second semester of senior year when the pandemic hit and if they come back in the fall, they will not have had an in-person class for a couple of years, and we know what it is like when students sit out for a year after graduating high school, it is not a pretty picture success wise. Students enrolling at UNF and UF for the most part will be fine.

Dr. Lebesch stated JAXUSA is tracking FAFSA completion rates. They were low last year but are lower this year which is a precursor to looking at who is going to enroll in the fall. The populations completing FAFSA the least are your more diverse first time in college students.

Eda Edgerton stated an issue she sees is new restaurants opening are hiring people and then get ghosted because there are no penalties. Potential employees receive several offers and decide if and which they will take which impedes the reopening of some businesses.

Wayne McClain stated in a meeting with eight St. Johns River fish camp operators to help them with some issues, what he found interesting is each one stated they have seen a huge increase in the number of young people fishing, renting cabins and boats, etc. during the week.

Dr. Pickens stated he would like to make a point regarding the stimulus money the college systems receives for direct aid to students. To receive the money, college students need to fill out FAFSA and demonstrate some need. During the first stimulus SJRSC received \$3 million, of which \$1.5 million went to student aid giving \$1,500 to 1,000 students. The college had a difficult time finding 1,000 students willing to fill out a FAFSA and become eligible for the money. In the second round they received \$1 million and \$5 million in the 3rd round for student aid. And Dr. Avendano at FSCJ received a relatively larger portion to do the same. Big checks will be written for students to go to school because that is what we were told to do with the money. And large areas such as Miami/Dade received \$175 million and Broward and Valencia getting \$60 million each. That is close to a quarter billion dollars that needs to be spent in 18 months, otherwise they need to give it back. That kind of money will support countries for a while. It is just remarkable! The Chair stated we never said any of this makes sense and we are starting to see the effects of what some will call "well intended support but not well thought".

Bruce asked Cheryl Taylor to talk about the City of Jacksonville committee she and Dr. Anna Lebesch sit on that deals with training. The committee's focus is: 1. Get disconnected students connected to

local colleges/institutions and assist them with FAFSA to increase the number of students applying for FAFSA. FAFSA's are not completed because people are uncomfortable giving out personal information. To remedy this the FAFSA conversation will start in the 9th grade and continue through graduation. When it is time to apply for FAFSA in the 11th and 12th grades, the family and students will be well aware of the process. 2. COJ is doing further outreach through a community-wide campaign with local faith-based organizations, local sports associations, and community partners and providing them with a consistent message to use and share "it is not just about 2 & 4 year universities but also provide information connecting them to the workforce" if they are still undecided and not just sitting at home. 3. They are looking at what kind of support students need once they return to school. A student survey indicated students need to go to work now versus college right now. Another survey result found overall apathy with educational institutions and a feeling that I am not sure this is what I want to do and because I am not sure I am not going to do anything. There is a grant to implement these steps and initiatives and track that success for the next 3 years. The hope of this group is to assist students early on and provide information to the students, families, and community so that the goal isn't just finishing high school but what is the next step after high school. Dr. Lebesch added the committee spent a lot of time concerned about the student's perception of apathy and lack of planning for the future. And as Dr. Pickens stated it is not just the affects this next year but the affects over the next couple of years and what will we need to support that especially as we look at the jobs that we will bringing to the region and the skills that will be needed to support it.

Legislative Update

Legislative Update: There are a couple of bills working their way through the legislature. House Bill 1507 and companion, Senate Bill 98. HB 1507 is a Speaker Priority bill. Both sides are looking for leverage. The bill is seeking to better align workforce and education. It created in the House an office of Reimagining Education and Career Health (REACH) that would be within the Executive Office of the Governor. It requires that office to create a "no wrong door" strategy for people that want to go into college no matter where they come from and envision a singular system of applying for help, i.e., CSNEFL. That would be a huge technological undertaking due to the various federal program requirements around our funding streams. It also creates an online opportunity hub available to the public that gives career information, cost information, outcome information for all training programs, such as CSNEFL's approved training provider list on our website. The House bill creates term limits (6 consecutive years) for private sector board members. Our concerns are rural counties where there are fewer business leaders to step up and do the volunteer hours it takes to do this, the tenure of our private sector board and the impacts moving forward. While we understand term limits, we need to help the legislature understand the negative impacts. Bruce will be speaking with Representative Clay Yarbrough after this meeting about our concerns and suggestions on how to make the bill better. Representative Yarbrough is carrying the bill in the House on behalf of the Speaker. We are also working with the senate about our concerns. Implementation and interpretation are the key. We will continue to follow this and make suggestions.

Dr. Pickens spoke to how the bill impacts the college education system. This is a priority bill of the House Speaker which stems from the misappropriation of funds by the Tampa Bay workforce board a few years ago; it got his attention. Dr. Pickens, as chair of the Florida System College of President's, his responsibility is to lobby for the Council. House staff have been working on this bill since the Fall. During the Speaker's opening remarks, he said he wants to create disruptions and feels this area needs the most disruption. Some version of the bill will pass and there have been a lot of conversations with the Senate. A white paper analysis developed by The Association of Florida Colleges on HB 1507 was sent to Senate staff and a copy emailed to Bruce. The Senate is looking for ways to add to their bill to move towards the House bill so it can pass that they can live with but also get something in return which is more accountability at the tech centers. The Speaker feels the money is being misspent on training people for low minimum wage jobs, and he does not want that. In the past, some colleges misspent funds, and when that happened the whole system got penalized and some of it is that and this is where we are. For the colleges, the money back guarantee is not

good for the colleges and feel they will be successful in getting that changed to retraining them. Another issue is having the State Board of Education approve programs versus the college District Board of Trustees. The Florida College System can move quickly to meet employer and/or student needs, whereas the State Board of Education is a cumbersome process and they don't have the time and it will be more work for staff. It is another layer of bureaucracy for the State Board of Education to approve every program. We are trying to convince the Senate to remove it. There will probably be more to it. This is not a 1-year process but believe this is wave 1 of a 2-year process. Bruce agreed.

Question to Dr. Pickens – Wayne McClain: Does it hold any weight for them to look at workforce boards such as ours that do it right or is everyone going to be punished? Reply: The Speaker made his mind up but there could be room for opportunity. The college approach is similar to that and their suggestions start off with “we support what you are trying to do with the transparency you are trying to accomplish, however” and then suggest things be done in a different way. Or “we understand or help us understand the problem you are trying to correct” so that we can have an idea of how that problem can be corrected in a less draconian way. The bill will pass but we would prefer some input. Dr. Pickens would like Bruce to touch base with him after his ZOOM meeting with Yarbrough if he feels there is something worth sharing that Dr. Pickens can communicate with House staff or the Senate Sponsor who is open to ideas where movement might be available. He will also let them know he is a member of the CSNEFL Board of Directors. And to Wayne's point, the best opportunity to communicate how an organization like ours does things well is through a member and the fact that the member and sponsor is from this area and has a relationship with us has a better opportunity to make a difference. There are opportunities in the Senate to massage this bill and come up with a compromise. The compromise is offered up in the Senate as opposed to the House changing it on their own.

The Chair thanked Dr. Pickens, the Executive committee, and participants for this rich discussion that helps solve. It is a new world, and we need to navigate it together.

Next Meeting Dates

Full Board Meeting: April 22, 2021, 9:30-11:00 a.m. ZOOM format.

Executive Committee Meeting: May 26, 2021, 9-10:30 a.m., Location/Format: TBD.

Adjournment: 9:55 a.m.