

North Carolina Policy Collaboratory Advisory Board

Meeting Minutes April 7, 2021 Via Zoom

Advisory Board members on the video conference: Al Segars (chair), Anita Brown-Graham, Jaye Cable, Greg Characklis, Don Hobart, Mark Little, Rick Luettich, Nate Knuffman, and Mike Piehler.

Collaboratory staff and students in attendance: Jeff Warren, Laurie Farrar, Steve Wall, Hope Thomson, Rebecca Rice, Janis Arrojado, Brooke Bauman, Dylan Morgan and Taylor Fitzgerald.

Al Segars began the meeting at 10:00. Segars provided a reminder to the Board about its important role in the functioning of the Collaboratory. Segars cited the UNC Conflict of Interest policy which the Collaboratory adheres to. Segars encouraged members of the Board to participate in projects and noted that the Chair is the only member ineligible to receive funding for research projects.

Segars asked for and received approval of the July 2020 meeting minutes.

Segars referenced the expanded and growing role of the Collaboratory. He stated that the leadership was exploring the possibility of adding to the Board a new member having expertise in health sciences or the medical field.

Legislative Update

Jeff Warren provided an update on Collaboratory projects and pending legislation that could add to the portfolio of Collaboratory research. Warren began by informing the Board that the Collaboratory offices were now located in the Genome Sciences Building on campus. He also stated that the Collaboratory was working towards a partnership project with every campus in the System.

Warren detailed reporting deadlines and shared highlights of Collaboratory projects that included the COVID-19 research projects, the PFAS Testing Network, the Flood Resiliency Study, and Operation Deep Freeze. Warren cited the upcoming legislative reporting deadline for the PFAS Testing Network on April 15, 2021 and the Flood Resiliency Study on June 1, 2021. Warren noted the positive amount of media coverage the Collaboratory received related to Operation Deep Freeze.

Warren walked the Board through a number of pieces of legislation that had been introduced in the current legislative session that would impact the Collaboratory. These bills included:

- House bill 196 (Session Law 2021-3), **COVID-19 2021 Response and Relief**
Provided **\$15 million allocation to the Collaboratory** to develop and manage a plan for an initiative to implement alternative COVID-19 surveillance methods.
- Senate bill 296, **Collaboratory/Fisheries Study**
Requires the Collaboratory to analyze trends to assess and develop policy recommendations to better manage the overall health and viability of the State's fisheries and fisheries' habitat.
- Senate bill 327, **Firefighting Foam Registry**
Provides a \$500,000 Appropriation for the Collaboratory to develop an online portal.
- Senate bill 338, **NC Policy Collaboratory/Research Grants HSMIs**
Provides **\$3,150,000 Appropriation** for the Collaboratory to award one or more research grants each fiscal year to each of the six HMSI constituent institutions.

- Senate bill 401, **Codify the NC Collaboratory**
Provides an additional \$1 million in funding for the Collaboratory and codifies the organization.
- Senate bill 544, **Water Safety Act**
The bill appropriates **\$15 million** to the Collaboratory for continued research on PFAS.
- Senate bill 602, **Flood Prevention Act**

Following Warren’s presentation members engaged in a discussion about the growing nature of the role of the Collaboratory. Greg Characklis inquired about the potential for bringing on more staff. Warren responded that leadership was already having discussions about the need to bring on additional personnel. Segars stated that the Collaboratory’s ability to run lean allows it to fund more research.

Research Priorities

Laurie Farrar provided an update to the Board about the current status of accounts for the current fiscal year. Warren suggested that it was the time of year to turn attention to potential funding opportunities in the upcoming fiscal year. He provided a couple of examples of potential projects, including a data management project. Warren requested the Board to provide input on this topic.

Mike Piehler suggested looking closer at research ventures tied to sustainability initiatives on campus. Segars recommended supporting more economic development work. Anita Brown-Graham and Mark Little discussed a project they have been leading related to helping communities recover economically for the impacts of the pandemic. Segars emphasized the importance of serving the state.

Jaye Cable informed the Board of the new cluster hire within the College of Arts and Sciences that is focused on the wellness and health of communities of color. Don Hobart discussed the relationship between health care and economic development and the potential opportunities to explore.

Project Reports

Hope Thomson presented to the Board on the Collaboratory’s COVID-19 portfolio. She shared some of the numbers related to the 87 projects, including \$22 million in leveraged funding, 30,000 study participants, 63 freezers for vaccine storage, and more than 1000 variants sequenced. Thomson also described the one-pagers being developed for each project.

Steve Wall provided an overview of the Collaboratory student staff program and the types of projects the students work on. Student interns Brooke Bauman and Taylor Fitzgerald presented an update on the development of the Collaboratory’s strategic communications plan.

The Board engaged in a discussion about improving the communications capacity of the Collaboratory. Segars asked about examples of lost opportunities. Bauman responded that there is the need to be more intentional in sharing information with legislators. Rich Luettich asked about the transition away from newsletter to more social media. Bauman responded that newsletters are foundation for content. Hobart and Piehler stressed the value of newsletters in reaching multiple audiences. Brown-Graham added that it was important to know the audiences we are trying to reach. She also stated that the process of developing this plan would create goodwill with our key stakeholders and those we engaged.

Segars thanked board members for their time and service to the Collaboratory and adjourned the meeting at 11:55.