



North Carolina Collaboratory Advisory Board

Meeting Minutes October 25, 2022 Via Zoom

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

Collaboratory staff and students in attendance: Jeff Warren, Laurie Farrar, Greer Arthur, Tara Tyson, Sarah Fitzgerald, Steve Wall, Caylin Luebeck, Adithi Reddy, Christian Chung and William Smith.

Al Segars began the meeting at 11:00. Segars began the meeting by noting the UNC Conflict of Interest policy which the Collaboratory adheres to and asked that it be reflected that there have been no issues with the policy. Segars encouraged members of the Board to participate in projects and noted that the Board plays a critical role in cultivating partnerships.

Segars asked for and received approval of the November 2021 meeting minutes.

DEQ/Collaboratory PFAS Fellowship Program

NC Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) Secretary, Elizabeth Biser, joined the meeting to make remarks about the DEQ/Collaboratory PFAS Fellowship Program. Secretary Biser discussed the value of having university professors working in tandem with state agency staff. She noted the innovative research approach to PFAS by researchers was benefiting DEQ.

Segars commented on the importance of the partnership and how current students want more than a classroom experience. Secretary Biser stated that they are exploring new ways to engage with students to help with the DEQ vacancy rate. Rick Luettich asked about the type of degrees that are needed for DEQ staff. Secretary Biser responded that DEQ hires recent grads and trains them on the job.

Director's Report

Before Segars introduced Jeff Warren he asked that Board members provide recommendations to him about potential new Collaboratory Advisory Board members.

Warren started his presentation with an overview of the funding from the North Carolina General Assembly over the last two years. Warren emphasized the Collaboratory is now in a growth phase and introduced the new staff members that have joined over the last year. He pointed out that UNC is now paying for the operations of the Collaboratory and provided an overview of the new space on campus for the Collaboratory. Warren concluded with a summary of potential priority projects, including research related to lithium mining and electric battery production.

Department of Public Instruction

Michael Maher and Jeni Korn presented on the recent RFP awards related to learning impact research. They began with background on their roles at DPI. Korn discussed the impact of COVID-19 on student learning across North Carolina. Maher discussed finding ways to support educators during the pandemic. Korn outlined the twenty research projects that were awarded across 14 higher education institutions.

Anita Brown-Graham commented on the research agenda of the awards and stressed the need for a sense of urgency. Korn and Maher responded in agreement and noted that as soon as information and results come in that DPI would share with policymakers and educators at the local level.

Update on Collaboratory RFP's

Segars introduced Research Director Greer Arthur and noted her outstanding work with the Collaboratory. Arthur provided a summary of recent RFPs related to the Business-Academia Partnership, Learning Impact, and Opioids. She highlighted the value of building partnerships that RFPs provide. Arthur asked the Board for feedback on review criteria and what information to request in RFPs.

Brown-Graham commented on the importance of new partners being able to find the Collaboratory and the need for transparency on the website. Don Hobart commented on his interest in the intersection between the Collaboratory and partners and the challenge it presents.

Women in STEM Survey

Caylin Luebeck provided a review of survey responses from the Collaboratory's Women in STEM survey. She stated that the survey received 55 responses. Some of the key themes involved challenges of the tenure process and lack of mentors for female faculty. Segars asked about the next steps and how to take action on what was learned from the survey.

Financial Update

Laurie Farrar began her presentation by introducing the new Grants Manager, Tara Tyson. Farrar discussed the budget for FY 2022-23 and provided an update on the internal audit for the CARES Act of 2020. Hobart asked about the operations from UNC and that funding source. Farrar responded that it was coming from F&A.

Communications Update

Sarah Fitzgerald presented on the rebranding of the Collaboratory, the launch of the newsletter, and a planned new website for 2023. She also noted an increase in interactions with the media through a press event and press releases. Hobart recognized the partnership between the Collaboratory and UNC Research Communications.

Project Report

Sambit Bhacattarya, Computer Science Professor from Fayetteville State University, presented his Collaboratory project. He presented on artificial intelligence for drones to reduce the needs for human guidance. He is working to develop prototypes for onboard AI. Warren noted the value of the HMSI program.

Segars adjourned the meeting at 1:05.