



UPSTATE WORKFORCE BOARD DISABILITIES COMMITTEE MEETING

April 30, 2021

8:30 a.m.

Virtual Meeting

Present:

- Ms. Jennie Thomas, Committee Chair
- Ms. Lisa Thomas, Committee Member
- Ms. Anne Brock-Trail, Committee Member
- Mr. Eric McAbee, SC DEW
- Ms. Ann Angermeier, UWB
- Ms. Dana Wood, UWB

Welcome and Introductions

The meeting was called to order at 8:30 a.m. by Ms. Jennie Thomas, Committee Chair. Ms. Thomas welcomed committee members.

Exploration of Disabilities Opportunities

Ms. Dana Wood, UWB Associate Director, reminded the committee that there was a discussion on a driving simulator grant. She shared that a grant was applied for to help with offering driving instruction to students with disabilities, but the grant was not funded. She mentioned that the school districts are interested in trying to secure resources to assist in meeting this need. Ms. Wood noted that Ms. Lisa Thomas, Committee Member, and Ms. Ann Angermeier, UWB Executive Director, visited the Clemson University International Center for Automotive Research (CU-ICAR) to explore opportunities for the schools. Ms. Wood opened the floor for discussion. Ms. Angermeier shared that the driving simulator was impressive. She shared that the simulator was demoed. The equipment can be tailored to individuals with disabilities as needed. She noted that the equipment was remarkable given this function and could be a game-changer if it can be provided to school districts. Ms. Lisa Thomas shared that the top-notch equipment would go for at least \$76,000 initially and that there would be a yearly maintenance charge.

Ms. Thomas shared that Dr. Jonelle Brooks and Mr. Homer Mayes, the manufacturer, both met with the seven Special Education Directors with the school districts for an overview. She noted that the school districts agreed that this would be an opportunity worth moving forward with and instructors would be covered under the school district. She shared that Dr. Brooks would like to do a pilot program to work out training protocols. Ms. Thomas said that it would be beneficial for the school districts to collaborate with CU-ICAR to show that the model works when reaching out to funders. Ms. Thomas asked for input from the group and the group discussed the topic.

Ms. Wood inquired about what the committee's role would look like for this initiative. Ms. Angermeier shared that the group could look at ways to create partnerships with others that serve disabilities populations outside of the school districts. She suggested bringing in corporations. The business partners may have an interest if it helps assist with the transportation issues. Ms. Wood asked the committee about the next steps for the project. The committee discussed the next course of action and how the equipment could be used to benefit other groups such as Upstate Warrior Solution that serve the veteran population. Ms. Wood also suggested a video be created highlighting the simulator. Her thoughts were that it may help with fundraising. She inquired what the project timeline would look like. Ms. Angermeier shared that more information needs to be gathered. Can the school districts cover the cost of instructors? Can the simulator be used by students during the day and opened to adults in the evening? She suggested creating a one-page overview of the project for prospective funders.

Ms. Jennie Thomas shared that the committee could look at creating partnerships with other disabilities/occupational therapy organizations as possible referral sources. She shared that Rehab Tech and Roger C. Peace Rehabilitation Hospital could be great partners since they work with rehabilitation and individuals needing vehicle modifications. Ms. Angermeier shared that working with Spartanburg Regional Healthcare System would be awesome because they have a simulator on site and that equipment could possibly be accessed by Project SEARCH students. Ms. Lisa Thomas shared that she would ask the directors from the schools about the next steps to help them think about ideas for funding or fundraising for this project. Ms. Angermeier asked if the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) would have a grant for something like this project. Ms. Wood shared she would review available funding opportunities. The committee decided that they would also invite district directors from Union and Cherokee County schools to be a part of this discussion. Ms. Lisa Thomas noted that she will work on sending simulator resources for the one-page document suggested by Ms. Angermeier.

Disability and Employment eLearning

Ms. Wood reminded the committee that at the last meeting there was a discussion on the Disabilities and Employment eLearning Modules. She shared that she reached out to Mr. Chris Sparrow, Able SC Employment Services Coordinator, to write a letter from the committee to encourage staff and partners to sign up for training as professional development. She noted that the modules are a resource from the committee for SC Works staff and community partners, and that this resource can be shared with those who may benefit from a workforce aspect.

Other Business

Ms. Wood shared that the end of the program year is June 30, 2021. She asked the committee if the time and/or date of the committee meetings should be reevaluated. She noted that a few members who normally can attend have not been present at meetings and would like to know if this is because of a conflict of timing. Committee members present felt that the current meeting time works with their schedules. Ms. Wood shared that she would reach out to other committee members, not in attendance, to find out if the current time and day works for them.

Ms. Wood also noted that the committee could use new members to help with community engagement. She charged committee members to nominate members who would be a fit for the committee to help with strategies for the advancement of the disabled population.

Ms. Wood shared that the meeting dates for the next program year are not scheduled yet, but she will work with Ms. Angermeier and Ms. Jennie Thomas on a proposed meeting schedule.

Adjourn

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 9:17 a.m. The next meeting date is to be determined.