



<http://ntrp16.org/>

North Texas Regional P-16 Council Meeting Minutes

September 21, 2021

9:00 am – 12:00 pm

Via Zoom

ATTENDEES

Members present - Jill Adams, Danielle Davis, Denise Davis, Annette Duvall, Tracey Fleniken, Becky Frederickson, Robert Gillies, Tiffany Gilmore, Mary Harris, Lisa Harrison, Christine Hubbard, Jean Keller, Barbara Lerner, Anna Mays, Cornelia McCowan, Bobby Morris, Lawrencina Oramalu, Patsy Renee Parker, Theresa Paschall, Anita Perry, Ray de los Santos, Richard Vela, Rosalyn Walker, Tiffany Wilkerson

Presenter - Anthony Walker, Assistant Director of Academic Initiatives, Tarrant County College

A. Greetings

Jean Keller welcomed everyone to the P-16 Council meeting and the start of the 2021-22 academic year. She reviewed the Council's vision, mission, and goals.

B. Approval of Minutes

April 27, 2021, meeting minutes were reviewed. Lisa Harrison moved to approve the minutes, Bobby Morris seconded, and they were approved as written.

C. Regional Data

TEA data on partnering ISDs may be secured at the following website:

https://rptsvr1.tea.texas.gov/perfreport/tapr/tapr_srch.html?srch=D

D. Panel: Equity and Social Justice in P-16 Education - Moderated by Rosalyn Walker and Christine Hubbard

Anthony Walker shared information in response to questions posed by Rosalyn and Christine.

- **Please introduce yourself and tell us a little about your work.**

I have been in education since 2002. I started as a high school teacher and would describe this as the best job ever. I taught young adults, 9th through 12th graders, with unique learning needs and opportunities, laying the foundation for a career that I hope others see as invested in and committed to work around equity-mindedness, inclusion,

and action. My background offered me foundational conversations around diversity and indifference although I did not have, at that time, the language for what has been instrumental in my work.

When I started on my doctoral studies, I was introduced to systems of power and privilege, which is why I say I'm a young, and hopefully, continuing-to-evolve practitioner. More than half of my life has been lived from a lens through which power and privilege were invisible to me.

My experience in higher education is diverse. I have worked at two- and four-year institutions of higher education. I have worked at Research 1 institutions, doctoral degree-awarding institutions, minority serving institutions, public, private, and historically Black colleges, and universities. TCC is now a Hispanic serving institution, and I have worked in institutions ranging from 600 to TCC, with close to 100,000 students. I have worked from entry to executive level positions.

- **How do you define “equity”? How do you define “social justice”?**

I describe equity as a mindset, and social justice as a process, a continuous process. Equity calls for recognition that individuals have different needs and face systems or barriers, whether intentional or unintentional. We must look for barriers that are in place and have negative impacts on individual persons, a community, or a particular population of individuals, inhibiting their progress or growth.

Social justice is a process that must evolve. For example, when you think about conversations in politics, legislation that impacts education, often, the language reflects where we are as a culture, in a climate that is not addressing the need. Social justice work must always be responding to those changes that the system is making, whether in language or in policy. Social justice is about systems, including some we not only acknowledge, but some we must unpack and work to reconcile with the roots of a system that has created an injustice.

Equity helps get us there, because equity sets minds to thinking about who this is going to impact first and worst, and then working backwards to get to an outcome where our decision making and policy and leadership reflect the needs, and the always changing climates of our institutions. Keeping the values of equity mindedness, inclusiveness and action at the forefront of our decision-making should drive our processes.

- **What is the role of P-16 education in promoting equity and social justice?**

The simple initial response is, “If we don't, then who will?” When higher education was founded in the 1860s, it had a very specific charge, which was to advance society and the democratic engagement of our citizenry. In theory, it was to make things more equitable and to help promote social justice. Now there is a whole other conversation about who higher education was designed for and who was excluded. If you just look at

the foundation or purpose of the charge and then move that forward into the 21st century and think about social justice as a process, then it is still, “if we don't, then who will?” At the core, it is our responsibility. We are supposed to lead by example and create a space where students, colleagues, and leaders are becoming critical thinkers. It is our responsibility to be invested in transforming students into learners. Learning requires engagement. We have policies and laws that create barriers to making things equitable. There are ways to work around that by working within the system.

One of the things I set my class up with every semester, and what I try to express to the students, is that if we cannot have conversations around diversity and difference, if we cannot have courageous and critical conversations that may represent conflicting values or perspectives, how can we expect individuals outside of higher education to have those conversations?

- **What systemic inequities currently exist in P-16 education? What advances have been made?**

One of the biggest issues is that we have never really acknowledged the system was built on inequities in the beginning. We have translated the conversation around to, for example, equal access; however, we have not connected it to important historical pieces until the 1960s. We like to think that there was an “aha” moment when the emancipation proclamation was signed and that everything between the 1860s and 1960s is irrelevant. We like our perception to reinforce systems of power and privilege. We like to point to key moments of perceived change and not connect them with the historical realities. We have never truly acknowledged that the system was designed to breed, reinforce, and create outcomes of inequity. We put band aids over some of the scars, but we have never fixed the broken leg, if you will.

Access, for example: TCC is an open access institution, as many institutions. There is an idea that everyone has equal opportunity and while they may, that is a different conversation from whether there are equitable opportunities. If I open the door and allow you to come in, but I am not feeding you. I cannot give you what you need because I do not know your story. I am not looking at how things outside of higher education have impacted what you are bringing in. I may be creating access, but am I truly creating opportunity for you?

One of the things we are seeing highlighted recently in Texas is curriculum. That is interesting but not surprising. As our communities and schools continue to become more diverse, our curriculum becomes narrower. Systems of power and people that are in positions of power recognize the importance and the value of language. That is why there are pushes to take things like the transatlantic slave trade and change it to the intercontinental capitalist trade. Because we recognize the value and the importance of language, we see that if you can control that narrative, then you control what people think and how they think about it.

Regarding critical race theory, where is the lie? The question I ask people who want to argue about critical race theory is, "What is wrong with telling a comprehensive or holistic story of who we are as a country, and why are we so afraid to do so?" We are afraid to do so because we do not want to disrupt the status quo or do anything that could have negative impacts on the way the system operates. The curriculum is a huge piece, and the representation is another piece. Over the past three semesters when talking with students, overwhelmingly our conversations are about the lack of diversity or representation of individuals who are not white in their classroom experiences. We have done a fairly good job, better than in the past, in creating access, opening doors that were traditionally closed. This is progress! Regarding the identity crisis, we often have not thought about what it means to us as institutions, as practitioners, or as leaders. How are we going to change who we are to be better equipped and prepared to serve a student population that is much different than it was 20, 30, or 40 years ago?

Until we create a space where it is not only okay, but encouraged, and we empower people to think through what that means for us from a very critical lens, a very authentic lens that is invested in principles of equity and inclusiveness and social justice, then the identity crisis will continue. Unfortunately, the burden to navigate that system, falls on the students. If we are not changing how we operate, function, think, and teach, the expectation of engagement and success will not fundamentally change. Therefore, the burden falls on the students for whom the system was often not designed in the first place, and yet we are still expecting and holding them to the same standards or expectations as they navigate a system that has sometimes insurmountable barriers for them.

- **How can public institutions promote equity and social justice in the current political climate, particularly the negative perception of "critical race theory"?**

It is important to take a step back and evaluate where we were, versus, where we are now. Some opportunities for professional development have expanded, for example, around principles of equity and diversity and learning communities. Fort Worth ISD has a Diversity Equity and Inclusion Council that looks at inequity in policies and is helping to move that work forward. TCC has a Comparative Race, Ethnic Studies Department. Progress is being made, and I hope we continue to see a transition in the willingness to have conversations about the fundamental difference between someone's intentions versus someone's impact.

- **How do you recommend engaging those who are unaware of equity and social justice issues? What about those who may deny that issues exist or become defensive?**

Ask questions and listen empathetically. With critical race theory, do not get caught up in the spectacle. We have created a problem that never existed, and now have a conversation around it that has been used to further divide people. The importance of selfcare is something that we do not think about often enough. Some people will never get on board or want to engage in a real authentic learning framework or discussion and

that is okay because you can move on to the next person. The Texas 60x30 initiative has specific goals around student demographics that have been helpful in reaching targets.

- **The North Texas Regional P-16 Council includes Collin, Dallas, Denton, and Tarrant Counties and works to improve student achievement, raise academic standards, and create smooth student transitions from one level of learning to the next and into the workforce. The Council is a collaboration between schools (Pre-kindergarten - 12 grades); postsecondary educational institutions, families, businesses, faith-based groups; local, state, and federal agencies; and community organizations. Stakeholders work in a collaborative and coordinated manner to foster a more integrated education system, while addressing college and career readiness, college access, and college and career successes. What recommendations do you have for this Council about the best ways that we can promote equity and social justice as a group and within our respective spheres of influence?**

Continue to have this conversation, and when appropriate expand it to a larger population, and be consistent in continuing the conversations. It is important to ask questions and to share/communicate resources, access experts on the topic, and books/articles that create a library of resources and information. Be intentional and mindful of how we connect the purpose of our work with the work itself and through the outcomes.

- E. **Discussion, Reflections and Actions** Christine Hubbard led a discussion that included the following responses to questions. Responses are from Anthony Walker unless otherwise noted.

What tips do you have for working with and addressing concerns of predominantly white faculty and staff who may be unaware or in denial or feel guilty when it comes to addressing this issue? What is the best way to engage our current employees in this work?

It is important to differentiate the conversation around the system versus the individual. We are all individual actors or players within a larger system, and it is important to recognize barriers are in place at a system level and then pare that down to a conversation about what is the impact on an individual.

Another approach is to take the stance that the experiences a person is telling you are true. Listen and take what they are telling you as honest and authentic. To do that changes how you respond. Their experiences are not made up.

What are pockets of excellence that you have identified?

As a result of student activism and students calling out their experiences as non-white communities and the lack of response, TCC created the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Office with a leader positioned at the cabinet level. They are currently conducting a race and reconciliation research project and are interviewing people from the past who may not have had very pleasant experiences. They want to learn where the gaps are, do the

research, have conversations that address the gaps beyond the surface level, and see how that translates into their Board or leadership makeup. They want to challenge faculty members to integrate more culturally relevant curriculum, not just in comparative race and ethnic studies, interdisciplinary studies, women, and gender studies, but also in biology and music, for example.

- **What are the benefits and drawbacks of having specific diversity and equity offices and diversity and equity programs and courses, versus making them part of everything you do, institutionalizing so that there is one benefit of having it named, and another benefit that comes from having it be part of what you do?**

That connects to the idea of equity versus social justice in some ways. In an ideal setting the DEI offices are the equity piece. They are the start, they are the drivers of changing mindsets to where we are thinking, leading, and making decisions with equity in mind. Hopefully what transitions and one of the outcomes of that is a process that is more focused on social justice and becomes a part of the institutional culture. The benefits are raising awareness and increasing visibility of the importance of the work or at least its potential. The drawback is that if you are not careful, it could become a boutique program, where the only time we talk about it is here, and any work involving diversity and equity must go through a particular office. The equity mindset should become the driver. That is the first step; from there, it becomes a part of the institutional culture. The offices do not necessarily ever need to go away, but their becoming part of the culture. The DEI work must be connected to the strategic work to move things forward.

- Tiffany Wilkerson thanked Anthony Walker for modeling ways to steer needed conversations. She described conversations and book studies she has led in Duncanville ISD that are being replicated by principals in their schools.
- Ray de los Santos raised whether others find people, and especially Latino and/or African American individuals/educators, not eager to get involved in the discussions because it has been too painful for them in their own processes in the past?

Anthony Walker responded that it is important to be mindful that being a person of color is not tiring; it is the white supremacy part that is tiring and exhausting. Individuals are tired of one roadblock after another. You think you are making progress, then leadership changes, and it seems like you are taking ten steps back. It is important to continue to share with someone who is invested to engage appropriately and allow individuals to engage as they are able.

- **How can we encourage students to raise their voices and share their experiences in our role as faculty or staff members without being viewed as agitators by administrators?**

Try to emphasize the weaving of identity awareness and identity development into the curriculum by adding reflective and reflexive conversations. Students become more comfortable sharing some of their thoughts about their lived experiences. The reflexive piece is where they start to connect it with feelings and situate themselves within that moment, beyond the reflection, which becomes the personal piece of it.

Journaling is one way. An autobiographical assignment is another, where students think about their family makeup, what was their racial identity from a systemic lens that results in power and privilege. It provides the identity piece and the connection with influences on who we are today.

- **Jean Keller asked for thoughts and recommendations regarding the concern that our data do not demonstrate that all students are succeeding, especially with the pandemic? We have seen incidents where some of students have not had access to resources.**

Walker responded that some of the struggle is how the systems have been designed. We have not fundamentally changed how we define what student success means and what student success looks like. We are continuing a traditional paradigm that has not kept up with the 21st century. One way to flip the conversation is to look at our gaps. We cannot control what a student brings with them. However, we can control our policy, our processes, who we hire, and our expectations. We, as the practitioners, had never been asked where our gaps were. Over time, that question has continued to come. We were able to start to create a climate because it was in pockets. We started to think about where the gaps in our system are, versus looking at student attributes over which we ultimately have no control, but we recognize our system, our mindset, our culture, and our climate do have the potential to have an impact. That is one place to start: look at this situation from an institutional lens or a systemic lens and focus on our gaps as practitioners and as institutions, versus the student piece of it.

- **Annett Duvall asked about the difference between removing barriers and being intentional. She described an initiative to enroll Men of Color in dual credit.**

Walker said that intentionality is leading with equity in mind, thinking through unintended consequences. Often, we can remove a barrier, but if we have not been intentional, removing one barrier may create three or four more. Using the data to drive some of your thinking, your decision making, helps and so does connecting data to ideas around representation.

- **Do you have any tips for us on how to recruit and support faculty as we work to ensure that our courses represent our student demographics?**

Getting representation matters, as does how you leverage data to validate some of your decision-making to diversify what is often a very homogenous pool of practitioners and

how you lean on data to justify that conversation. Hiring processes need to evolve to drill down to the type of individual beyond the demographic mark who can help lead where you want to go. Cluster hires, for example, or a hiring critical mass of individuals who reflect the vision of where we want to go and bring them in at the same time or within a very similar time frame, so that they have a support system. It also sets the precedent for where you are going as an organization or institution and demonstrates your commitment to get there. Hopefully, for those that are already there, they see these changes, and they start to reimagine and become more invested in that vision because they are seeing the paradigm shift from what was, to what is, and what will be.

It is good to establish this work with members of historically privileged groups to accompany those who have been historically disenfranchised because that leads to the best possible outcomes. What are your thoughts?

Within that frame of thinking, the idea of who leads and their experiences will help drive the conversations, and the work so that it moves beyond just representation.

F. Committee Reports

Communications, Networking & Social Media – The Committee will post/share the articles and books Dr. Walker mentioned in his presentation, as well as continue to post regional information. The Teacher Campaign is developing, and schools need teachers. Our challenge is how do we get the best of those students interested in that career choice. We hope that we will start thinking about how we introduce students into the teaching profession and look at the pros and cons of being an educator. We will continue to work with others to get ideas to share, along with things that are being done in districts, such as incentives to support future teachers. Roselyn shared concern that as TCC is becoming a Hispanic serving institution, it has fewer than 5% Hispanic faculty. Barbara Lerner said we must persevere. White women were not always in positions of leadership in higher education. Equity calls for the continuous effort.

Leadership & Sustainability – We will continue to provide examples of success in achieving greater institutional equity and social justice. It is especially interesting to hear this conversation amid the critical race theory discussion that is going on in our state, and experience how that it is being addressed. We will continue to look for good examples from which we can learn together.

Professional Development – 2021 Pathways to Texas CCMR, October 27-28, 2021, 9am-3:30pm [2021 Pathways to Texas CCMR Summit: Schedule](#). Jean and Mary Harris shared a session was accepted for this conference that grew out of the TXRAN grant. The work of one high school counselor to recruit students into dual credit courses was highly successful. She will share strategies she used. However, this work was not equally successful with all subgroups of students. Related data collected by a research team composed of secondary, community college, and university mathematics educators uncovered additional information that points to possible remedies for

inequities in dual credit systems, with focus on experiences of students eligible for free or reduced price lunch.

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) is convening a discussion of multiple measures for the TSIA (Texas Success Initiative Assessment) and will address use of different measures in the light of student characteristics, student financial need, persistence, and grit. Barbara Lerner reflected on how hard we worked for a single measure leading to the TSIA. Are we reacting to higher rates of student failure with removal of developmental education and the struggles of the pandemic?

Anita Perry announced a virtual college fair being held as part of GenTX week. November 16-20. The focus is on completion of the FAFSA.

Ray de los Santos invited members to give to the LULAC National Education Service Centers on North Texas Giving Day, September 23, 2021.

Research, Assessment & Accountability – As a region, we need to focus on what our student demographics look like in terms of who is taking advantage of the College and Career Readiness. Who is choosing dual credit options? Who is choosing in high school AP, OnRamps, dual credit? Who is choosing to go to college? How can we reach out to the students that we are missing if we do not know who they are? Lawrencina Oramalu reported that she is now at the TWU Center for Student Leadership and is interviewing dual credit students as leaders at the university.

G. Additional Updates and Information Sharing

Join THECB for annual GenTX statewide initiatives; #WhyApplyDay, Generation TX Month and GenTX Decision Day. In November, GenTX Month combines a statewide College Application and Financial Aid Awareness campaign, the nationwide American College Application Campaign (ACAC) initiative, and the 60x30TX Texas Challenge to Reach Higher efforts into one powerful month to encourage students to complete a college application and FAFSA. GenTX Month also coincides with the opening of both the FAFSA and TASFA applications. <http://gentx.org/>

[North Texas Community College Consortium | Communicating - Cooperating - Collaborating \(ntxccc.org\)](http://ntxccc.org) Events. Christine drew attention to the professional development opportunities provided by the North Texas Community College Consortium (NTCCC).

Discussion continued with attention drawn to the Texas Council of Governments report, implications of the Legislative sessions, status of the focus of THECB and its strategic plans, focus on nontraditional students and military awareness, and the need of high school teachers for graduate-level courses in content to qualify for teaching dual credit.

H. Adjournment and Next Steps

Jean Keller adjourned the meeting with thanks to everyone for sharing their knowledge and

expertise in support of all students and especially to Roselyn and Christine for leading the program. Sincerest thanks were also extended to Dr. Walker.

Please mark your calendar!

2021-2022 NTRP-16 Council Meeting Dates and Programs

9:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Date	Location	Host	Topics	Program Facilitator
December 7, 2021	ESC Region 11	Lisa Harrison	Legislative and Council of Government Updates	Anna Mays Christine Hubbard Lisa Harrison
February 15, 2022	Virtual	Christine Hubbard (Technical Support)	North Texas Demographic and Education Challenges	Ray de los Santos Tiffany Gilmore Shareea Woods
April 26, 2022	Collin College Technical Campus	Raul Martinez	Career and Technical Education Pathways (HB-5, P-TECH, and T-STEM)	Javier Garza Anita Perry Lisa Harrison