

ADVANCING INNOVATION IN RURAL EDUCATION

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Introduction

The MDHEWD Equity Summit is a one-day virtual learning opportunity to address advancing innovation in rural education. The Missouri Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development envisions a collaborative effort between the state and institutions of higher education to deliver equitable outcomes for rural students. As a part of the state's effort to increase degree attainment amongst Missourians to 60% and workforce participation at 70% by 2030, a focus on rural education is imperative. Developing partnerships, fostering community, exploring innovative practices for rural pedagogy, and initiating teacher education programs to serve high-need occupations are the key topic tracks for our Summit.

Linking positive practical action, sharing ideas and evaluated approaches, and exploring research findings are common elements that offer opportunities for learning and for you to engage with scholars at the forefront of their fields. Our virtual conference will offer synchronous participation in workshops, featured speaker sessions, and trend topics. In addition, the sessions will be recorded and made available On Demand for those unable to participate in the conference.

THANK YOUs:

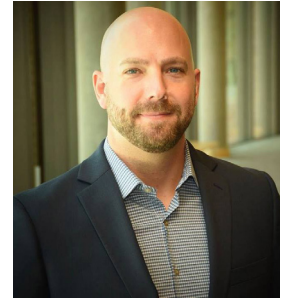
- Dr. Bennett G. Boggs, Commissioner, Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development
- Leroy Wade, Deputy Commissioner, DHEWD
- Carla McDaniel, Office of Administration
- Heather Dolce, Asst. Commissioner, Communications
- DHEWD Communications staff: Jason Strickland, Natalie King, Devin Jungmeyer, Meghan Zeller-Warren
- Claudia Browner, Executive Director, Office of Administration
- Sarah Moore, OWD Independence Job Center
- Wendy Johnson, MACC - Hannibal
- Kim Hoehn, Operations, DHEWD
- Joshua Fischer, Alicia Erickson, and David Hewkin, Office of Postsecondary Policy, DHEWD
- Dr. Kara Cahill, Conference Organizer, Office of Postsecondary Policy, DHEWD

November 7, 2023

9:00 - 9:25am

Opening Convocation

Dr. Bennett G. Boggs & Dr. Matt Newlin



9:30 - 10:30am

Keynote Address: Towards a Brighter Future: How Rural Education Can Thrive

Dr. Mike McShane

As we emerge from a tumultuous half decade of American life, we have a chance to take stock of the status of higher education in America, particularly in our rural communities. What are the challenges? What are the opportunities? Perhaps most usefully, where are institutions of higher education experimenting, rethinking, and meeting with success. In this talk, Dr. Michael McShane will both highlight the larger trends in the space as well as offer real-world examples of thoughtful educators building the institutions of the future, today.



Dr. Michael McShane is Director of National Research at EdChoice. He is the author, editor, co-author, or co-editor eleven books on education policy, including his most recent *Hybrid Homeschooling: A Guide to the Future of Education* (Rowman and Littlefield, 2021). He is currently an opinion contributor to *Forbes*, and his analyses and commentary have been published widely in the media, including in *USA Today*, *The Washington Post*, and the *Wall Street Journal*. He has also been featured in education-specific outlets such as *Teachers College Record*, *Education Week*, *Phi Delta Kappan*, and *Education Next*. In addition to authoring numerous white papers, McShane has had academic work published in *Education Finance and Policy*, *The Handbook of Education Politics and Policy*, and the *Journal of School Choice*. A former high school teacher, he earned a Ph.D. in education policy from the University of Arkansas, an M.Ed. from the University of Notre Dame, and a B.A. in English from St. Louis University. He is also an adjunct fellow in education policy studies at the American Enterprise Institute.

10:30 - 10:45am

Break

10:45 - 11:45am

CONCURRENT SESSIONS: 45 Min Talk

Session A: Tocarra Williams – Building Strong Futures with Weak Ties: Enhancing Social Capital for Rural First Generation and Low Income Students

Acquiring social capital involves developing a network of relationships that offer support, information, opportunities, and resources. College students hailing from rural areas, particularly those who are first generation and low-income, encounter unique obstacles when it comes to harnessing social capital. However, there are opportunities for these students through the cultivation of “weak ties,” which can help them overcome the barriers that often hinder

Session A Continued

their educational and career paths. Weak ties refer to connections with individuals who are not part of one's immediate social circle. These connections can provide an encouraging environment that enhances college students' confidence and self-efficacy. Such reinforcement fosters a sense of belonging and self-belief, both of which are pivotal for academic and career achievements. Participants will have an opportunity to create action plans with feasible strategies aimed at increasing social capital for these vulnerable students.



Tocarra Williams, a proud first-generation college graduate from rural northern Missouri, is currently the Assistant Director of TRIO Student Support Services at North Central Missouri College (NCMC) in Trenton. With nearly ten years of experience at NCMC, she focuses on improving graduation and transfer rates for low-income and first-generation students. Previously, she worked for Missouri Children's Division, collaborating with families and service providers to reduce the risk of child abuse and neglect. Ms. Williams obtained her first college degree from NCMC as a teen mom almost two decades ago. Her personal and professional experiences drive her dedication to fostering social connections that help underserved student populations achieve academic and career success. She holds a Master of Public Affairs degree from the University of Missouri-Columbia and is currently pursuing a PhD in the Truman School of Government and Public Affairs (MU), where her research interests revolve around social capital and underserved populations.

Session B: Evelyn Fuller and Tyra Esparza – Supporting Student Postsecondary Attainment Through Trio Talent Search Services

Committed to the goal of helping students starting in the 6th grade and through high school graduation, the University of Arkansas TRIO Talent Search program helps students overcome economic, social, academic, and cultural barriers to higher education. The session will focus on how program services and school/community partnerships play an important role in students' postsecondary education success. The presentation will highlight the different services the program provides while also demonstrating activities specifically used with students.



Evelyn Fuller is Director of College Project/University Access Talent Search programs at the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville, AR. Having started with the initial Talent Search grant in 1991 designed to assist students in overcoming economic, social, academic, and cultural barriers to higher education, Evelyn has years of experience working with high school students. Previously, she worked with the Academic Development Office on the UA campus assisting college students with additional services to make them successful in their degree attainment. As a first-generation college student and child of an immigrant parent, Evelyn understands the need for these students to have additional support and services while working towards postsecondary degree attainment. Evelyn has a Bachelor's degree in Zoology and Master's in Human and Environmental Science from the University of Arkansas.



Tyra Esparza is an Assistant Director with the University of Arkansas TRIO Talent Search program located in Fayetteville, AR. She has worked with UA TRIO Talent Search programs for the past four years and as a first-generation college student herself, she understands the unique challenges that students face and is passionate about breaking down barriers and creating initiatives that support their post-secondary educational goals. Before working with the UA TRIO Talent Search program, she worked with adolescents with substance use disorders and with children in the Arkansas foster care system. While completing her Masters in Counselor Education with a focus in Rehabilitation Counseling from the University of Arkansas, she worked with individuals with disabilities in aiding them with entering and returning into the workforce.

Session C: Jennifer Thomsen –Pell Grant Expansion: Higher Education Opportunities for Individuals Impacted by the Justice System

This presentation will focus on higher education opportunities for individuals impacted by the justice system and the community and workforce opportunities in rural areas. The federal government recently reversed a decades-long policy barring individuals in the justice system from receiving Pell Grant funding, the U.S. Department of Education's hallmark grant program for higher education students with financial need. This reversal followed years of pilot programs in several states. Many states have tracked the success of the 9,000 students that have earned an associate's degree, a bachelor's degree, or a certificate or diploma between 2016 and 2021. Many of these students return to the communities they were raised or seek opportunities in the area they studied, which is bringing workforce opportunities to many rural areas. ECS staff will present on the recent legislation enacted on this topic, policy trends, findings from the pilot states, and opportunities for continued engagement.



Jennifer Thomsen is a Principal Consultant at Education Commission of the States. In this role she provides nonpartisan research and analysis on a diverse set of state-level education issues, spanning early learning through postsecondary and the workforce. Prior to joining Education Commission of the States, Jennifer worked as a non-partisan staffer for the Colorado General Assembly. Jennifer is dedicated to providing state leaders with high-quality research that supports them in crafting policies that have a positive impact on all students' lives.

11:45am - 1:00pm

Break

1:00 - 2:30pm

Workshop Concurrent Sessions

Session D: M. Newlin – Re-Writing Rural Student Narratives

While colleges and universities are attempting to recruit and retain more rural students, the narratives about rural spaces and people are not changing. In fact, most institutions still take a deficit-based approach to rural students and communities rather than celebrating their strengths. Additionally, rural student voices aren't being centered or heard on college campuses because few rural students have the cultural or social capital to disrupt the institutional environment. However, there are strategies, resources, and models already available to help institutions improve the experiences of their rural students. This session will provide both interactive, reflective, and team brainstorming activities during which attendees will learn and share about the myriad ways rural students can feel a better sense of belonging.



Dr. Matt Newlin is the Founder and Principal of Matt Newlin Consulting. Dr. Newlin has over 17 years' experience in higher education and college access. He has served as the inaugural Director of Rural Initiatives at College Advising Corps where his work focused on increasing postsecondary enrollment for rural students in Missouri. As a consultant, he has worked with Harvard's National Center for Rural Education Research to increase college and workforce preparation for rural students in New York and Ohio. He has served on the Leadership Team for the NACAC Rural and Small-Town Special Interest Group and is a cofounder of RuralTogether, a national community of practitioners working to improve rural equity in postsecondary spaces. Finally, Dr. Newlin is the creator and host of the Rural College Student Experience podcast which focuses on centering and elevating voices of rural students in college.

Session E: Vicki Weaver – Using Visual Thinking Strategies to Improve Critical Thinking and Competency Training

This proposal is for a 90-minute workshop at Equity Summit 2023 where workshop attendees will be introduced to Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS). The session will begin with an interactive PowerPoint utilizing the VTS teaching method followed-up by a deconstruction of the VTS process and an examination of facilitator and student behaviors exhibited during the conversation. The session will close with a question-and-answer wrap-up along with the distribution of VTS materials and contact information.

As a contemporary art museum in rural Missouri, Daum Museum has been offering VTS training for teachers and student tours successfully for the past fourteen years. The museum has also partnered with local, rural schools to implement VTS into their curriculum with the goal of enriching instructors' teaching practice and encouraging student growth through thoughtful, carefully facilitated conversations. Through these facilitated discussions, students increase their critical thinking skills that over time transfer to other classroom interactions as well as elevating soft skills that empower students to interact effectively and harmoniously with other people.



Vicki Weaver, Daum Museum curator of education, received a BS in art education and a BFA from Northwest Missouri State University, Maryville, and an MFA from the University of Arizona, Tempe. She has worked at the Daum since 2000, and her position includes oversight of the museum's education program. Weaver was named Museum Art Educator of the Year by the Missouri Arts Educator Association in 2008 and has served on the Missouri Arts Council Advisory Panel for Arts Education. She has completed level three professional development training in Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) and is a certified VTS lead trainer. Weaver has attended both in-person and online institutes and workshops with emphasis on advanced VTS training, VTS and studio art forum, lead teacher training, VTS and aesthetic thinking workshop, as well as various summer institutes. Weaver is and has been introducing VTS to Daum visitors and educators in central Missouri since 2009 by leading and co-leading VTS trainings for area elementary through community college level instructors.

Session F: Kristie Larson – Activating Agilities to Explore Careers and Build Networks

In Missouri, approximately 60% of high schools are considered rural. Rural schools and communities are sources of pride for our state, but challenges to prepare students to be college and career ready with limited access to school funding, technology, and jobs is an uphill climb. Students and teachers need resources to help them identify tools to build confidence, translate skills, and explore career pathways to equip them for success in an ever-changing economy.

Research from The DeBruce Foundation finds career literacy + network strengths = employment empowered individuals. It may seem like a simple equation, but 7 of 10 Americans are low in one or both areas and 4 of 10 are low in both. The DeBruce Foundation will discuss how tools such as the Agile Work Profiler, Agilities framework, and Career Explorer tools can help individuals enhance their career literacy by leveraging their skills and interests. Couple that knowledge with the network strength found in rural community partnerships, in-school and out-of-school programs and students will be equipped with what it takes to launch careers and navigate career transitions across a lifetime.



Kristie Larson is the Strategic Relationship Manager of The DeBruce Foundation where her focus is on developing strategic, innovative partnerships with stakeholders across the nation. Kristie served nine years as the Director of Education for the American Royal Association in Kansas City, Missouri. In this role, she oversaw the association's agriculture education programs, outreach initiatives, and scholarships. Kristie currently serves as the association's Affiliate and Special Events Coordinator and as the curator of the American Royal Museum. Kristie has dedicated her professional career to the advancement of agriculture education through work in a variety of industry segments-non-profit, government, and corporate organizations including the National Pork Board, Iowa Agricultural Development Authority, Heritage Trading Company, and Dairy Farmers of America. Kristie has volunteered on boards including the Missouri Agriculture Foundation, Mizzou CAFNR Alumni Board, Mizzou Alumni Board of Kansas City, the Epsilon Mu Chapter of Sigma Kappa Housing Corporation Board, and the Visitation School Ministry Team. Kristie has a BS in Agriculture Education and a minor in Agriculture Economics from the University of Missouri.

2:30 - 3:00PM

Trend Talk Sessions

Session G: Kari Hanks – rootEd Missouri: Increasing Postsecondary Success for Rural Students

National philanthropic organization rootEd Alliance has trained and placed dedicated college and career advisors in rural high schools across America to help students define, plan, and achieve their educational and career goals following graduation. In partnership with the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and Ozarks Technical Community College, rootEd has placed advisors in 135 rural high schools. This session will highlight rootEd's advising model; and its impact, to date.



Kari Hanks, Director of Programs for rootEd Missouri. I have served in education for over 20 years. I have been a high school educator, an adjunct instructor at a community college, and a Regional Director with rootEd Missouri prior to my current role. I am committed to helping rural Missouri students find opportunities to ensure they are on a path to success after high school.

Session H: Leigh Kolb –The Rural College as a Cultural Hub: Film Screenings and Guest Lectures Create a More Open World

A curated Film and Lecture Series has the potential and power to offer culturally and socially inclusive programming to not only students and staff, but also the wider community, particularly in rural communities. This Trend Talk will introduce attendees to East Central College's Film and Lecture Series—its history, programming examples, community partnerships, and operational information—as well as provide tangible information about programming films (costs, distribution companies, planning), scheduling guest speakers, and offering in-person and remote programming.

In a time of attempted limitations on diversity and inclusion in and out of the classroom, colleges have a unique and important role to be able to offer the community cultural programming. It's our privilege and responsibility to serve as a cultural and social hub for our communities to help create more a more culturally competent populace. Film screenings (documentary and narrative films, modern and classic) and guest speakers are an excellent and accessible way to nourish the potential of our rural institutions.



Leigh Kellmann Kolb, Associate Professor of English at East Central College, has been organizing the ECC Film and Lecture Series since 2014. The series brings documentaries, narrative films, scholars, authors, journalists, and poets to campus throughout the year. The series features events that are programmed with a focus on social justice and cultural inclusion. Her writing about film and television has appeared in numerous books, magazines, and on-line publications. She serves as a screener and juror for film festivals such as the True/False Film Festival, St. Louis International Film Festival, and the Riverside Short Film Festival.

Session I: Ben Erwin – State Rural Education Policy Trends

Join Ben Erwin from Education Commission of the States for a review of trending education topics with impacts in rural communities. Bryan and Ben will provide an overview of trends and relevant policy examples of state efforts to address the digital divide, student health and wellness, teacher preparation, student transitions, and post-secondary access and supports. Each of these issues has a significant impact on the educational opportunities available to rural students and this session will lay the groundwork for more targeted conversations throughout the conference.



As a senior policy analyst, **Ben** works on tracking legislation, answering information requests and contributing to other Policy Team projects. Ben has worked extensively on school choice and teacher issues, as well as graduation requirements, accountability and innovation. Prior to joining Education Commission of the States, he taught high school social studies in Kentucky and worked in education policy at the National Conference of State Legislatures. He earned a master's degree in education policy from the University of Colorado Boulder and a bachelor's degree in history and education from Transylvania University.

3:00-3:15pm

Closing Session: Dr. Matt Newlin

Notes

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**DEPARTMENT OF
HIGHER EDUCATION &
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT**