**Purpose:** Convening of statewide network of stakeholders and leaders, sharing best practices, and accelerating the discussion on unconnected and opportunity students and higher education policy and practice in Nebraska. *(draft)*

**Vision:** Use data and student voice to improve equitable outcomes in postsecondary educational attainment and/or certification for students who are unconnected and/or considered opportunity students in Nebraska. *(draft)*

* **Educational attainment** 🡪 the completion of credential beyond HS diploma such as certificate, associate degree, bachelor’s degree, and professional degree
* **Unconnected students** 🡪 young students aged 14 to 26 that have experience in public systems such as foster care, juvenile justice, probation, homeless, and/or are at-risk of homelessness and/or experienced or at-risk of human trafficking
* **Opportunity students** 🡪 population of students that include those that are pregnant/parenting, first-generation, immigrant, and/or refugee

**MEETING NOTES**December 3, 2020

Attendees:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Bill Owen | VP Strategic Initiatives | MCC |
| Jim Lambert | State Director, JAG | JAG Nebraska |
| Dawn Coffey | Opportunity Youth Liaison | MCC |
| Theresa Webster | Dean of Students | SCC |
| Felipe Longoria | Deputy Executive Director | Central Plains Center for Services |
| Jordan Heim | Academic Success Coach | UNL, Center for Academic Success and Transition |
| MaryPat Coe |  | Court Improvement Project |
| Sydney Kobza | Assist. Director of Career and Technical Education | NE Dept. of Education |
| Rose Hood Buss | Executive Director | The Hub |
| Crystal Aldmeyer | Assist. VP of Transition Services | Connected Youth Initiative |
| Andra White | ETV Program Director | Central Plains Center for Services |
| Treve Florom | Director of Outreach Services | EducationQuest Foundation |
| Lori Romano | Director | UNL, Center for Academic Success and Transition |
| Chandra Essex | Central Navigator | Community IMPACT Network |
| Jessi Atha | PALS/LEAP Coach & Higher Ed. Liaison | Central Plains Center for Services |
| Summer Bleich | Pre-Doctoral Intern | UNL, CAPS |
| Tanya Smith | PALS/LEAP Coach | Central Plains Center for Services |
| Angie Ludemann | Administrator | NE Dept. of Health and Human Services |
| Mark Vazquez | Manager of Solutions Integration | Heartland Workforce Solutions |
| Mallory Asay | Independent Living Specialist and LEAP Coach | Central Plains Center for Services |
| Wendi Sieler | Workforce Program Coordinator | City of Lincoln, AJC |
| Dylan Wren | Workforce Administrator | City of Lincoln, AJC |
| Greg Donovan | Director | Society of Care (Santee Sioux Nation) |
| Jeffrey Southall II | Assist. Director UNO Service and Leadership | UNO |
| Erin Porterfield | Executive Director | Heartland Workforce Solutions |
| Kerra Russell |  | UNL |
| Shauna Smith |  | NE Dept. of Labor |
| Steph Volkmer | Project Coordinator | Court Improvement Project |
| Sara Riffel | Vice President, Connected Youth Initiative | Nebraska Children and Families Foundation |
| Jean Hammes |  | School & Main Institute |
| Anne Herman |  | AVA Insights |
| Deanna Brakhage |  | NE Dept. of Health and Human Services |

* Opening Discussion: **What would it take for all of us to improve higher education experiences and sense of belonging for Nebraska’s students with experience in foster care, homelessness, and other systems?**
* Community college: being able to connect with youth through community orgs, meet with the youth earlier and get to know the population.
* Peer mentors at the college available to help support youth
* Stay connected with youth and community orgs throughout the youth while they are in college
* Early exposure and awareness for youth who may not believe college is possible (Aspirational)
* Lots of support to get youth to college, but not a lot of support once they are in college and in a brand-new culture.
* Once a youth hits 19 they lose the supports and resources that they had with systems involvement. Each college institution is large and hard to navigate.
* Making sure youth choose the institution that is the best fit for them.
* Identify what barriers are missing and how to keep youth off academic probation.
* Making sure stability needs are met such as housing so the youth are able to focus on their educational success. Wraparound services and supports
* Making sure basic needs of housing and food are met.
* Pull back and help administration and faculty understand the needs of the population – misconception that when a youth gets to college, they are prepared and have all needs met.
* What are the mandates the faculty need to know?
* How to ask for and utilize funding to help support youth
* Identify young people who can be supported and coached into higher education. Currently there is not a good way to identify young people early on to help support them.
* Change perspective on youth. They are not problem children but are resilient and have a ton of strengths that have gotten them to college!
* Making sure youth are engaged in campus activities and services.
* 2014-2020 Connected Youth Initiative postsecondary and career pathways history
  + SEE SLIDE DECK for notes
* Discussion: **What do we, as an older youth system (higher ed, foster care, juvenile justice, etc.), need to “unlearn” in order to move forward?**
  + Be more active in supporting college tours for system involved youth
  + Have more intentional conversations with youth about what they want to be when they grow up and figure out the next steps to get there (degree, certificate, etc.)
  + Higher ed needs to stop believing their systems work for everyone and evolve to better serve all students

**As a group, what possible policy and/or practice improvements or ideas do you want to explore further in 2021?**

* Support dual credit opportunities (youth getting college credit in HS)
* Work with K-12 schools to offer opportunities to all students and offer support to help them be successful
* Push middle and high schools to support students and help provide mentors and services to support success and confidence for students (decrease learned helplessness)
* Working with administrators and staff at high schools to make sure students are not invisible and doing it all on their own. Counselors need to help everyone not just those who are asking and are prepared for college.
* Mentors can make a huge difference in supporting the students and help them “be seen”
* A means to consistently provide the message and information to students and institutions
* A uniformed consistent way to identify students
* Break down the silos among systems (child welfare, postsecondary, juvenile justice, etc.) to work collaboratively as a larger system
* Tuition waiver for foster youth legislation (to include graduate degree programs)
* “Opportunity Student-Friendly” designation/recognition program for Nebraska’s PSE institutions and training programs
* Scale/replicate UNL’s Well-Being Coach model
* Disaggregate traditional student data at the postsecondary education level (e.g. “first-gen students”) by students with various systems-level experiences (e.g. foster care) – work with postsecondary education institutions to identify sub-populations
* Develop on-campus learning communities for opportunity students or student populations with similar barriers to persistence (e.g. foster youth, student parents, etc.)
* Partner with PSE institutions for flexible on-campus housing options (dorms open to students during breaks, off-campus housing for student parents, etc.)
* Fast track employer hiring upon completion

**Is there anything you would like to learn more about in 2021?**

* Is there a Nebraska access network in higher ed?
* Lack a shared data system among institutions and systems
  + Unless student self identifies participation in systems or disabilities the college does not know
* The implementation of the Higher Education Act in Nebraska (verification of foster care involved students and homeless students for FAFSA and the utilization of Foster Care Liaisons)
* Perkins and Pell – possible policy recommendations/waivers
* Lessons learned from states that have implemented a tuition waiver
* **Wrap-up & Next Steps** 
  + Theory of Change workshop with Urban Institute – early 2021, Sara will send Doodle Poll
  + Fostering Academic Achievement Nationwide (FAAN) – next meeting is January 11, 2021 @ 3:00 PM CST (email Sara Riffel if interested in attending)
  + LEAP Learning Community – next meeting is December 16, 2020 @ 12:00 PM CST (email Sara Riffel if interested in attending)
  + Invite others to this network and to future meetings
  + Consensus is it is important to keep the conversation going