

Business, Consumer Services and Housing Agency– Governor Edmund G. Brown Jr.

Bureau for Private Postsecondary Education
2535 Capitol Oaks Drive, Suite 400, Sacramento, CA 95833
P.O. Box 980818, West Sacramento, CA 95798-0818
P (916) 431-6959 F (916) 263-1897 www.bppe.ca.gov



**Task Force Meeting Minutes
Wednesday-Thursday, July 15-16, 2015**

**Milton Marks Conference Center
Monterey Room
455 Golden Gate Ave.
San Francisco, CA 94102**

Wednesday, July 15, 2015

Task Force Members in Attendance:

Sean Crawford, Chair
Kim Thompson-Rust
Liz Simon
Marie Roberts De La Parra
John Carreon

Committee Members Absent:

None

Bureau for Private Postsecondary Education (Bureau) and DCA Staff in Attendance:

Joanne Wenzel, Bureau Chief
Mina Hamilton, Legal Counsel, Department of Consumer Affairs
Benjamin Triffo, Associate Governmental Program Analyst
Leeza Rifredi, Licensing Chief

Call to Order

Mr. Crawford called the meeting to order at 9:37 am on July 15, 2015, at the Milton Marks Conference Center, Monterey Room, 455 Golden Gate Ave, San Francisco, CA, 94102.

Agenda Item # 1 - Welcome and Introductions

Mr. Crawford welcomed the Task Force, and the public, followed by introductions of the Task Force.

Agenda Item #2 – Public Comment for Items not on the Agenda

David Phillips (from Hackbrite Academy) and Camden McAfee voluntarily introduces themselves. No further public comment.

Agenda Item #3 – Approval of Minutes- May 11, 2015

Mr. Carreon moved to approve the minutes, Ms. Simon seconded the motion. (Mr. Carreon: Aye; Ms. Rust: Aye; Ms. Simon: Aye; Mr. Crawford: Aye; Ms. De La Parra: Aye). The motion passed.

Agenda Item #4- Guest Speaker

(a). Licensing Process Overview – Leeza Rifredi

Ms. Rifredi, Bureau Licensing Chief stated that the following information may be found on the Bureau's website. Ms. Rifredi provided an overview of the application process, stating that when the Bureau received an application, it is reviewed for completion (not compliance) within thirty days. If it is not complete, a letter is sent to the applicant.

Once a completed application is on file, it will go to a queue for an analyst review. There is a thorough analytical review, ensuring it meets all Bureau standards. If there are deficiencies, a letter is sent notating all deficiencies, allowing thirty days for a response. Within two weeks of any response, it is reviewed for compliance. If it requires a Quality of Education review, it is sent to an Education Specialist to review curriculum, staff, etc. If the application is still deficient but only has a minor issue, the Education Specialist will reach out to the applicant; if there is a major issue the application will be prepared for denial, followed by a deficiency letter.

Mr. Crawford asked what determines if a Quality of Education review is required. Ms. Rifredi said that it depends on the type of application (e.g. if it has already been reviewed by a different licensing entity, the Bureau will accept their approval).

Ms. Rifredi continued that if deficiencies are corrected it will be moved to approval, if not it will be moved to denial, with the right to appeal.

Mr. Carreon asked if the Quality of Education unit is under Ms. Rifredi. She responded that it is not. Ms. Wenzel noted that the Quality of Education Unit is overseen by Dr. Benjamin Walker.

Mr. Crawford asked about the timeframe for an application in a queue for an analyst. Ms. Rifredi said that with the backlog, it is currently taking approximately six months to a year, but she cannot give an exact time frame. Mr. Carreon asked if this time frame includes Quality of Education. Ms. Rifredi said that it does not; however, both units are hiring more staff to address this. Mr. Carreon asked about the timeframe for appeals. Ms. Rifredi stated that it takes about six months to a year for a hearing date.

Ms. Rifredi next discussed the different changes at an institution that require an application. For example, a Change of Educational Objectives (adding of a program), requires an application if the program is unrelated to what is already approved for the school. In the Information Technology field, it will more than likely be a non-substantive change.

Mr. Carreon asked about the timeframe for opening a new branch. Ms. Rifredi stated that it typically takes thirty days, depending on the quality of the application. The only types of changes that take longer are applications for Change of Educational Objective, and Change of Educational Delivery, which are handled by Quality of Education.

Mr. Carreon asked if there is a threshold change in a program that determines if it needs to be reviewed by Quality of Education. Ms. Rifredi stated that the regulations do not have a threshold; it's a case by case basis. Ms. Wenzel stated that it comes down to when does a program cease being that program, and becomes something else.

Mr. Crawford asked if there is a backlog for substantive changes. Ms. Rifredi stated that there is not.

Ms. Simon asked for confirmation that new related programs are considered non-substantive changes. Ms. Rifredi confirmed.

Ms. De La Parra asked if the appeals backlog has always been this high. Ms. Rifredi stated that it used to be higher, and has actually been decreasing. Ms. Wenzel stated that it is out of the Bureau's control, and that the Attorney General's office sets the court dates.

Mr. Carreon asked if a denied school can reapply for Bureau approval. Ms. Rifredi stated that there are no restrictions.

Mr. Crawford asked if the exact figures for the appeals backlog are known. Ms. Rifredi stated that she is working on a spreadsheet right now, and it should be available by next month.

Mr. Crawford asked if there has been a trend in new applications. Ms. Rifredi said that it staggers, but currently it is down.

Mr. Carreon asked for information regarding Quality of Education, and the application backlog. Ms. Rifredi stated that there is a little bit of a backlog, probably in the six month to a year range, but there is a sizeable staff addition that is currently going through training. She anticipates that the time frame should be going down in the near future.

Mr. Crawford asked if there is a public outreach to let institutions know that they need to be approved or licensed. Ms. Wenzel stated that when it is brought to the Bureau's attention, a letter is sent out stating to stop operation, and to become approved. Mr. Carreon followed up by asking if there is a proactive approach that the Bureau takes part in. Ms. Wenzel stated that there are individuals in the Enforcement Unit who look for these institutions, field complaints, etc. Mr. Carreon asked how many of these schools are out there. Ms. Wenzel informed him that there is no way to tell, but there are many. Ms. Rifredi followed up with saying that there is a website, calgold.ca.gov, which shows what requirements are needed to operate a business in the respective city or county. Mr. Crawford asked how someone who

one day decides to open a school would know to contact the Bureau. Ms. Rifredi stated that she is not sure. Mr. Crawford requested a copy of the contact letter for schools operating unapproved. Ms. De La Parra asked if there is a list of schools who have not responded to these letters. Ms. Wenzel said that it is with Enforcement, and the citations that are sent out. There were no further questions for Ms. Rifredi.

Mr. Crawford asked for any public comment. David Phillips of Hackbrite Academy asked to confirm the process of application for Bureau approval. Ms. Wenzel went through the process that Ms. Rifredi had described. Mr. Phillips asked how other states have dealt with coding schools. Ms. Simon stated that in New York there is an interim approval (not full) of twelve months, with a potential six month extension. Mr. Carreon stated that Enforcement in New York is abysmal compared to California, and that the Bureau is much more organized. Mr. Phillips stated that they appreciate the help in the application process. Mr. Carreon stated to look at the July 30, 2015 Department of Education meeting on Financial Aid for non-traditional institutions. There were no further public comments.

Mr. Simon asked if there can be a few more minutes spent on Quality of Education process. Mr. Crawford asked for a fifteen minute break; planned to reconvene at 10:45 am.

The meeting reconvened at 10:53 am.

Ms. Rifredi returned for comment on the Quality of Education Unit. She stated that the Unit looks first at admission requirements, and then it looks at enrollment projected for the first three years, and how that number was calculated. The Unit also looks at descriptions of each program, and the courses associated with each. If the institution offers distance education, the Unit asks to be provided with access to the education platform. She noted that the Education Specialist will also want to see how the assignments are graded. The Education Specialist will review the skills and competencies that the students will have at the end of the program, and how that is measured. The Unit will also review if there are any general education requirements for graduation. Regarding faculty, the Unit will want to know how many faculty members will be needed to support the program, and the faculty's experience (could be degree, experience, and skills). The Unit wants the faculty to have a diverse background, i.e. not all graduated from the same institution. The institution will need to explain how the faculty will participate in the school (research, office hours, etc.). Finally, Ms. Rifredi stated that the Unit will review the facility and equipment available for students, the learning environment, the job outlook, and the institutional plans to maintain data on graduates employed in the field.

Ms. Wenzel stated that often Education Specialists find that curriculum is plagiarized from other institutions.

Ms. Simon noted that she has observed that Education Specialists view programs as a larger piece of a puzzle, versus standalone programs that are broken down to levels of completion. Mr. Carreon added that this is addressed in the definitions that he and Ms. Simon drafted.

Ms. Simon asked about the best way to demonstrate experience for faculty in new technologies. Ms. Rifredi stated that resumes are great, and that the institution can explain to the Bureau how the faculty meets the requirements. Ms. Wenzel noted that continuing

education of faculty is reviewed by the Compliance Unit. There were no further questions for Ms. Rifredi.

Agenda Item #10 – Discuss Task Force Report Mandated by California Education Code (CEC) section 94880.1

(a). Definition of Key Terms Used in CEC 94880.1 (including but not limited to “innovative subject matters” and “high demand technology fields”)

Mr. Crawford asked to move Agenda Item 10a to Wednesday.

Mr. Carreon stated that these definitions were constructed with the idea of having a candidacy process for high technology institutions. Mr. Carreon then went through the provided document. The intent was to be narrow, but not to limit the Task Force.

Ms. Simon noted that Mr. Carreon did a great job describing the document, and that she is open to discussion on items that were not included.

Ms. Rust asked the intent of programs only being pass/fail. Mr. Carreon responded that there are not checkpoints, and that instructors work hands on with the students on their projects, and that they are focused on keeping the students up to speed. He also noted that program length also makes it difficult to have the program on a 4.0 scale.

Mr. Crawford noted that the term non-accredited short term program needs to have a distinction from non-accredited institution. He also recommended adding non-credit bearing to the definition, due to potential confusion on students thinking they can transfer credits. Ms. Wenzel clarified that Mr. Carreon is recommending that this statement should be included in the definition. Mr. Carreon recommended use of the phrase “Typically non-credit bearing.”

It was recommended to change the title to Description, versus Definition.

Ms. De La Parra asked if there can be definitions for the soft skills that students learn during these programs. Ms. Simon noted that these skills will often come from employers.

Ms. Wenzel sought clarification on whether the Program Advisory Committee would be a Bureau entity. Mr. Carreon stated that it is not intended to be that way. Ms. Simon added that “Stand Alone” should be added to “Short Term”. Mr. Crawford also made a recommendation that the description may need to include some language addressing the constantly evolving, and rapidly changing nature of the industry. Ms. Rust asked if Highly Skilled Employment is only being described in terms of software. Mr. Carreon stated that it pertains to being computer driven, and he gave examples of Data Management and Data Analysis. Ms. Wenzel brought up the Task Force Report Format and that the Definitions seem to fit in with the format.

The Task Force asked for Public Comment, Camden McAfee noted that he appreciated the conversation, and asked how he can present prepared documents in a formal manner. Mr. Crawford stated that there will be opportunity at the Advisory Committee meeting.

Ms. Rust noted that team/collaborative skill development be added to the definition. Also recommended that exclusive of textbooks, and pass/fail should be removed. Ms. Simon noted that textbooks may be used, but pass/fail is used across the board in the industry.

Mr. Carreon suggests that the Program Advisory Committee be used as a proxy for the Quality of Education Unit, to improve speed to market.

Agenda Item #5 – Institution Representatives Panel – Keeping Students on the Cutting Edge of Technology

Meeting resumed from lunch at 1:03 pm.

Scott Zaloom of General Assembly and Jon Stowe of Dev Bootcamp addressed the Task Force. Mr. Stowe gave a brief statement on his background, as well as the history of Dev Bootcamp. Scott Zaloom provided an overview of his background, and his involvement with General Assembly.

After giving a brief history of General Assembly, Mr. Zaloom added that they offer part time programs (twice a week), and immersive programs (10-12 weeks long), the later which is designed for individuals who wish to change careers. He went on to note that they also provide resume building, interview preparation, and how to work with teams as a product manager. He stated General Assembly not only teaches technical skills but also skills to find work, and brings potential employers to the students. They have an education team that works with employers to see what skills are needed to succeed within certain fields.

Mr. Crawford started questions by giving an overview of the Task Force. He then asked how the institutions track what happens with graduates, and how they use marketing to reach potential students.

Mr. Stowe stated that until this year there was no marketing for their program, and noted that leading up to graduation they do mock interviews, develop resumes, create LinkedIn profiles, post their work for potential employers to view, and use a system called DevConnect, which matches graduates with employers in their employer network. There is no cost for employers to participate. They then meet with graduates to see how the job search is going, and work with Kaplan for verification of employment.

Mr. Zaloom stated that General Assembly uses in class outcomes curriculum to prepare students for employment. Students are also partnered with a career coach to help guide them. This is their main means of tracking where students are in the job search process, where they are applying, etc. They also have a program called General Assembly Profiles where they can post work they have done, skills, etc. and potential employers can view this information. They have also started using Task Management systems that students can use to track their job search, and that career coaches can use to stay in touch with the students. Two weeks after completion of the program, they have a “meet and hire” where employers come in; it is held in a science fair format. Graduates are invited back to various events until they are employed.

Ms. De La Parra asked if Dev Bootcamp uses the term “cohort” in regards to students, employers, or both. Mr. Stowe stated that it is just for students, and it is used to describe students who have gone through Phase Zero of the program together (first nine weeks that are online), and then come in the door together as a group.

Mr. Stowe stated that they have worked to create a more inclusive culture for women and people of color. This allows for students who do not have the means to get involved in a Computer Science program to get involved in the industry, and the new economy. Someone who is going through the program and may be struggling can repeat with the next cohort for free, and be considered the expert. Ms. De La Parra asked about the number of students who need to repeat. Mr. Stowe said that in a group of twenty-six to twenty-eight or so cohorts, there are two or three students who repeat, and another two to three who are suggested to repeat. Mr. Crawford asked if this is faculty recommended. Mr. Stowe stated that it is a collective decision.

Ms. De La Parra asked Mr. Zaloom if students typically gain employment during the program, or post-program. He responded that 99% of students find work within 180 days. They will never stop working with students, as long as they are putting in the work. Students are advised to come back if they want to change jobs, or can transfer to a different General Assembly location to find work in a different market. Mr. Zaloom stated that every now and then the top students find employment during the program, but choose to finish. Ms. De La Parra asked about the effectiveness of the LinkedIn profile. Mr. Zaloom stated that he doesn't have exact statistics, but one of General Assembly's goals is to make the recruitment process as simple as possible for employers.

Ms. De La Parra asked both panelists what the percentage of women, and people of color partake in the program. Mr. Zaloom stated General Assembly has a program that allows scholarships for people of color, women, and veterans, and General Assembly helps students obtain employment. Mr. Stowe stated that industry average is below 20%, and that currently in San Francisco Dev Bootcamp is at 28%. They want to create a welcoming culture, and focus on diversity initiatives. They provided \$500 thousand in scholarships to women, and people of color, which came to two people per cohort. They want to focus on perception of what a computer coder is, and make it so anyone can see themselves as a computer coder, and the opportunity it can present.

Ms. Wenzel asked if in the White House's Tech Hire Initiative there is a desire to increase the representation of women, and people of color in the tech industry; and if there is a benchmark. Mr. Stowe stated that their goal is equal representation. Ms. Simon said that it was a broad statement, not an exact number. Mr. Stowe also stated that when working with the White House that they also worked with Fortune Top 100 companies and that they have been told that there is a 15% workforce shortage and that translates to about half a million jobs. There will be a large piece of the workforce retiring in the next ten years (75-80%), which will lead to many more opportunities. The issue is that there is an under-skilled workforce, and determining how can they fill the deficit overtime. Ms. Simon noted that the White House has focused on these models, due to the low barrier of entry for these skills. Mr. Zaloom stated that the ability to transition your career in such a short amount of time is what makes it so attractive.

Ms. Wenzel asked what the admissions criteria is for these institutions. Mr. Zaloom stated that the program is designed for beginners, but you need the grit, and initial interest in the program. After turning in an application a prospective student will meet with an admissions representative to go through logistics to ensure the student has the time and resources to complete the program. There is then a coding exercise, followed up by two interviews. The first is with an admissions representative for a fit test (does this person work well in groups, are they here for the right reasons) and then an interview with an instructor to go over the coding exercise. Ms. Rust asked if there is delayed payment until employed, both panelists responded no.

Mr. Crawford asked if the program is divided to different segments (online, on campus). Mr. Zaloom stated that there is online pre-work that students need to complete, and there are TA (Teacher's Assistant) sessions for struggling students. Once they have entered the program it is purely in person education. For every twenty students they bring in two individuals to assist with homework after the instructor has left. Mr. Stowe stated that Dev Bootcamp is fairly similar, and noted that the admitted to applied ratio is currently around 34%. The preparation program is 15-25 hours per week for approximately nine weeks (about 180 hours). When the program starts, it is 9 am to 6 pm, five days a week. On evenings and weekends, they hire recent graduates to come in and coach.

Mr. Carreon asked if the "soft skills" are incorporated during the day, or at different times. Mr. Stowe stated that it usually takes place in Phase Zero, and during the evenings as a group discussion. He also noted that yoga is required during Phase One (one session per week), however it is optional the rest of the program. Mr. Zaloom said soft skills are introduced in Phase One. Career coaches come in once a week and work with students on these skills. Students are also required to have three one on ones with their career coach, as well as their instructors.

Ms. De La Parra referenced a Federal Reserve Document called "The Color of Wealth," and noted that underserved communities often have citizens who lack interpersonal skills, and technology access that is needed for these programs. Ms. Simon noted that General Assembly receives funding for scholarships for students who fall into both of those categories. General Assembly partners with community groups to help source these types of students. They are also working with nonprofits to create a bridge program for students who don't meet admissions criteria.

Mr. Crawford asked how many different programs a prospective student has to select from. Mr. Stowe stated they just have Web Development, and that they view it as a foundational piece of many different career paths. Mr. Zaloom explained that there are multiple programs at General Assembly, depending on student interest.

Ms. Wenzel asked both panelists if there are any students who have asked, "I wish I would have known this before I started," and what is the "this"? Mr. Zaloom answered that most of the time the "this" is the intensity. Students hit a "week six" period where students can't see a light at the end of the tunnel, and that General Assembly provides a support structure accordingly. Mr. Stowe agrees with the previous statement, and that they provide support for students so that they can take care of themselves. Dev Bootcamp focuses on the super ego, and opening yourself to learn new things, and what are the things holding you back from learning. Students may feel overwhelmed in their first job interview, and the questions they

are asked about their code. As much as Dev Bootcamp prepares them, it is often difficult for students to think of themselves as a developer. Mr. Zaloom stated that these moments can often be positive, and not just negative. Students love that they work with employers, and the community driven education environment.

Ms. Wenzel asked if it is common for bootcamps to teach in this style, where they change the way that students learn. Mr. Zaloom stated that it is taught that failure does happen, and it is acceptable. They need to break the mindset of failure.

Ms. De La Parra noted that she is impressed that both organizations focus on health, and mental wellbeing.

Ms. Rust asked if pre-work is an admissions requirement, and if it is given prior to enrollment. Both institutions stated that students are admitted to the program then assigned the pre-work. If the pre-work is not completed by day one there can be a partial refund. They can also defer enrollment. She also asked what kind of feedback they have received from employers. Mr. Zaloom stated that most of the soft skills have come from the employers, as well as the curriculum. Mr. Stowe said the feedback they receive is focused around diversity, and having graduates bring that culture. They also receive requests for return-ships for their employees. It can also be as simple as more java script for example.

Mr. Carreon asked for the panelists to describe who is selected to be faculty. Mr. Zaloom said that instructors go through a similar process as the students and are asked why they want to teach, and must provide a sample lecture. Most prospective faculty are freelance developers, or on sabbatical from work. They then go through 2-3 weeks with their coaches to learn fundamental teaching skills. Mr. Stowe informed the Task Force that out of the 11 instructors that they have in San Francisco only two were former teachers, but 9 hold Computer Science degrees. Due to technologies changing so fast, a degree in the area is viewed as a secondary item. Mr. Zaloom also stated that they have a similar screening process as General Assembly. The ideal teacher has been in the field at least three years, worked for a few companies, and knows modern software. Ms. Simon stated that they ask their instructors to take one quarter off a year, potentially going back to the workforce, work with General Assembly's engineering team, in curriculum development, etc. Mr. Stowe stated that Dev Bootcamp does the same thing, and that time off is paid.

Ms. De La Parra asked if the schools initially had to reach out to employers, or if they were drawn to the quality of graduates. Mr. Stowe said that their founder originally reached out to friends he knew at companies, but now they are much more proactive around this area. Mr. Zaloom stated that they have a similar structure; they balance proactive, and reactive. He also noted that there is an educational component with employers as well, in regards to how to hire their graduates, and what skill levels to expect.

Ms. Rust followed up by asking if there has been a change in employment with the growth of the schools. Mr. Stowe stated that there has been a change, especially in the last year.

Mr. Carreon asked for each company to describe how they give back to the community. Ms. Simon stated that they focus on the opportunity scholarship fund (scholarship participants are required to give back to the community-mentorship capacity, build a website for a nonprofit); actively creating opportunities for alumni to give back to the public sector; and reaching out

to populations outside of their metro areas. Mr. Stowe stated that they are just beginning to understand how they can broaden their reach, but in particular they work with Yes We Code, Girl Develop It. They are focusing on finding ways to help these programs continue success.

Mr. Crawford asked about formal feedback from students who fall out of the program, and students who do graduate, if they receive feedback when students get jobs, and the wages that they make. Mr. Zaloom said that at General Assembly, at the end of each day students fill out exit tickets that discuss what they learned that day, and how things are in the classroom. Twice during the program they provide formal feedback. If students are being counseled out, they will have an exit interview. Graduates receive a “Yes I got a job” survey that details wage, hours, etc. They also do a 100 day follow up to see if students still view General Assembly the same way they did when they graduated. Once they have the data they aggregate it across campuses, cohort to cohort, etc. The exit tickets are used by the course provider to make quick adjustments in the classroom.

Mr. Stowe stated that their process is similar; however their feedback is received through a tool called the Feedbackinator in Phase Zero. Overtime all of this data creates a heat map, so they can see who is going to struggle by the time they enter Phase One, so instructors can know this up front and it can be addressed immediately. Once they are on campus, feedback is gathered weekly and the staff sits down and reviews it. There is an escalation path based on the feedback: practitioner to the campus director, who will meet with the student. If students leave the program, they still follow up with them. Upon graduation they ask if the student will recommend the program to others; this is done at graduation, and seven weeks after.

Ms. Wenzel asked what the attrition rate is. Mr. Stowe stated that if you make it through Phase Zero the completion rate is 95-97%, but Phase Zero attrition is 15-20%. Mr. Zaloom noted that in a cohort of twenty to twenty five you will typically see 1-2 students not make it through the entire program.

Ms. Wenzel asked how this is presented to the students upfront. Mr. Stowe explained that the degree of difficulty is presented to the student, and that maybe a more gradual onramp will be necessary for the student. They ensure that students are told that this is something that they can try. Mr. Zaloom said that they present the students with a code of conduct and graduation requirements on day one. That way if the student doesn't think that they can meet these requirements, they can be counseled out. Mr. Stowe said that Dev Bootcamp has similar documents. Ms. Wenzel inquired further on how students are prepared. Mr. Stowe stated that during Phase Zero, students have in depth conversations with coaches and faculty to discuss the expectations of the program.

Ms. De La Parra asked if data is collected on why students leave the program. Mr. Stowe stated that they do collect this data.

Mr. Crawford asked what is provided to a student who graduates. General Assembly issues a letter of completion (not an actual certificate); Dev Bootcamp issues a set of dog tags and a letter of completion that can be provided to someone who requests it.

Ms. Wenzel asked about the admissions process at Dev Bootcamp, in which Mr. Stowe stated that it starts with application submission, followed by a face to face interview (conducted by alumni) that consists of a review of the student code and agreement. He also noted that there

are lots of student testimonials and videos that new students are encouraged to view. Mr. Zaloom stated that General Assembly has the same, and that they also have alumni come and speak at information sessions.

Mr. Carreon and Mr. Crawford each asked if there were any final comments from the panel. Mr. Stowe noted that due to the speed at which curriculum changes, peer review may be a helpful component to add to licensure for these institutions. Mr. Stowe stated that Dev Bootcamp has no issue with the School Performance Fact Sheets.

Mr. Stowe and Mr. Zaloom both thanked the panel.

There was no public comment.

The Task Force recessed for ten minutes. The meeting reconvened at 3:31 pm.

Agenda Item #6 – Discussion and Consideration of Comments by Guest Speakers and Institution Representatives Panel

Mr. Carreon made note of the disclosures that are provided. Ms. Simon noted that in the report there may need to be a narrative of the disclosures that are provided to students. Mr. Carreon also mentioned the selective admission process. Ms. Wenzel asked if the disclosures will speak to the rigor of the program, meeting academic standards, etc. Mr. Carreon stated that current requirements for catalogs should be kept, but should be built upon by what Ms. Wenzel said. Mr. Crawford noted that disclosures should address the time commitment in regards to online, or on campus. Ms. Wenzel noted that it seems to be more about the admissions process, versus disclosures.

There was public comment from Mr. McAfee who stated that what he has heard today in terms of rigor is in line with what his client Hackreactor offers.

Meeting was adjourned at 3:43 pm.

Thursday, July 16, 2015

Call to Order:

Meeting was called to order at 9:34 am.

Agenda Item #7 – Former Students Panel – Institution Impact on Your Career

The Task Force introduced themselves to the panel, and the panel introduced themselves. Mr. Crawford began by describing what the Task Force is looking at, and made note that the students understand this field in a unique way. Mr. Crawford began by asking the former students to describe how they learned of the institution, how they applied, overall experience, and their job search experience.

Leslie Forman stated that she graduated from UC Berkley; and that after college she traveled and taught in Chile. When working in Chile she felt that she had hit a limit on what she could do. She moved back to San Francisco and enrolled at General Assembly. She really enjoyed the personal attention from instructors, working in groups, and getting to know

industry professionals. She noted that going to General Assembly allowed her to reconnect to the tech arena, and learn in a way that textbooks cannot provide.

Santiago Gomez Lavin stated that he is from Mexico, and has a background in banking, and renewable energy. He holds a degree in technology, but had never coded before attending General Assembly. Mr. Lavin attempted to learn on his own, but the process was going very slow. He googled “how to learn to code,” and came across many bootcamps. He was attracted to the accelerated pace, versus the speed he was learning by himself. Mr. Lavin stated that the program was very intense and fast paced. General Assembly told him that he could expect to be a junior developer, and that’s what happened. Among coding General Assembly also taught him about technology as a whole, and helped him gain a job after graduation (he is still in the same job). So fascinated by the change in his life, his sister came to San Francisco to take the same classes. Now his sister is back in Mexico working with the skills she developed. He did note, however, that there is much more to learn, and that General Assembly was just the start.

Patrick Reynolds attended Dev Bootcamp, and was a Computer Science graduate in undergrad with a business minor. Leading up to graduation he realized that he couldn’t create his own business in the tech industry without understanding the foundations of it. Mr. Reynolds discovered Dev Bootcamp a year before he graduated undergrad. In his experience there were four significant parts of Dev Bootcamp: it created an alternative way to learn; her worked with more passionate people; he was provided him time to experiment and develop his ideas and items that he was passionate about; and finally the alumni network.

Ms. Wenzel asked the panel about their opinion on the difference between traditional learning and coding schools. Mr. Reynolds stated that the traditional classroom has many different avenues you can experiment in. With Dev Bootcamp it is much more specific, and with the foundational knowledge it is easier to transition to different areas; allows for a great jumping off point. Mr. Lavin stated that he agrees with Mr. Reynolds. With his experience, he felt that he did not get enough hands on experience with his undergraduate degree, whereas General Assembly allowed him that opportunity. He felt that he was prepared for the first day of work; there was real world application, and how to interact in a corporate setting. You become a great programmer by coding, and by doing that for three months it’s very effective. When he went there he was hungry, knowing the workforce shortage and the opportunity in front of him, and that he would be able to develop his ideas. Ms. Forman noted that her field required a different skill set. While at General Assembly she learned the mindset that she would need to have in order to succeed in her field. In particular, she learned how to turn an idea into something more concrete. Ms. Forman also noted that to be successful in this role you have to bring a variety of skills to the table. Individuals with a background in what they studied (tech) were able to find jobs quicker, and it took extra work to figure out how she could differentiate herself. Mr. Reynolds added that he was in class with individuals that did not have his same background, and he felt that he only had an advantage for the first two weeks, and that the differentiation in students was due more to their work ethic, and not their background.

Mr. Crawford followed up by asking about the interview process from application to acceptance. Mr. Reynolds stated that he heard of Dev Bootcamp from a friend. He applied a year before planning to attend. At the time when he applied there was already a wait list of 3-4 months. Mr. Reynolds picked Dev Bootcamp because it was the only school he had heard of. He believes that now one of the difficulties is the message that is being told to

students from the variety of bootcamps (be a coder, make a lot of money). He stated that he had about nine weeks of prep-work, during which he got to know his cohort through Skype and Google Hangout. Mr. Crawford asked if during the interview process he was told the pre-work workload, and expectations. Mr. Reynolds said that it was communicated that it was very intense, and was shown testimonials by former students. Personally, he loved the immersion, likened it to studying a new language in a foreign country. Mr. Reynolds noted that he currently works at Dev Bootcamp as a coach for about 10-15 hours a week. Mr. Crawford asked if his experience was typical. Mr. Reynolds stated that he believes the other students experienced the same thing, and that they feed off of each other's energy. The only benefit he had by having a Computer Science background, was that he was able to make connections in the material more quickly, but he wasn't farther ahead than his fellow cohorts.

Ms. Rust asked if the program length is appropriate. Mr. Lavin said that you can always learn more, so it is hard to say. In the program you touch on pieces, and if you want you can go deeper, but three months was very appropriate. Ms. Forman stated that longer could be better, due to the fact that they were introduced to so many tools. She wishes that she had some more time to become better versed. She did note that the core of the course is the logic that connects the different subjects, and you can build upon the subjects that speak to you based on your background. She reemphasized that more time could be beneficial, or maybe a break in the middle. Ms. Forman also noted that the student is provided more of a mindset, versus a toolbox. Mr. Reynolds stated that maximizing the immersion is key, and that longer could cause burn out. He believes that having prior computer knowledge could be helpful during Phase Zero; but ultimately the investment beforehand is beneficial to success during the nine weeks.

Ms. De La Parra asked about the diversity in the programs. Ms. Forman stated that her program was 80% women, many different nationalities, and academic backgrounds. There was also diversity amongst socioeconomic backgrounds, and age groups. General Assembly makes it known to the students that they strive for diversity. Mr. Lavin said that his cohort was also diverse in age, ethnicity, and academic backgrounds; though it had more men than women. Mr. Reynolds stated that his cohort leaned male, and that the age spectrum was also vast. He noted that the industry is definitely lacking in Latino, and African American representation.

Ms. De La Parra asked if they felt overwhelmed, and what the support structure was like. Mr. Lavin said he was constantly overwhelmed, but that was an expectation. In many instances you can hit a wall, and the more you work, the more frustrated you can get. He stated that having fellow students and instructors that have been through it, allows you to get over those walls more quickly. Ms. Forman said that support and feedback was crucial in her experience. There were multiple perspectives, but a common language. Mr. Reynolds noted that there was someone on campus to speak to if you were having difficulties outside of campus. There is a mandatory conversation with the therapist the first week you are there in order to open a dialogue. He also said that cohort support is vital to success and balancing yourself. Mr. Reynolds still speaks to his cohort to this date, and they share experiences and recommendations. Mr. Lavin agreed that there is a bond formed with your cohort due to the amount of time spent with them. Mr. Reynolds added that the cohort becomes a family, and that is vital to the development of the student.

Ms. Wenzel asked the panel about students who washout of the program. Ms. Forman said that one washed out in her cohort, but she believes that it was more due to personal life issues and not workload.

Ms. Rust asked if when the student goes to a job interview do they take their entire project to the employer, or just the component that they worked on. Ms. Forman stated that each student took the project and customized it in their portfolio. Doing the project is focused more on team work and the client, whereas the portfolio is designed to showcase the individual skills of the student.

Mr. Carreon asked about how the soft skills were taught at the institution. Mr. Lavin said that the biggest challenge in his cohort was working on the group project. He believes that this directly translates to how it is working in a startup, and a company. There is no boss, we are all the same, and have to decide on how to split up the work. Learning how to work with personalities, deadlines for projects, and working with a team was one of the major things that he took away from the program. Mr. Reynolds stated that the team project is both good and bad. The good is that you can work with a team, the bad is that if you are in a bad group, you may not get a good job. He also noted that the soft skills were very valuable. There are nightly sessions with discussions around empathy, how to receive feedback, etc. After going through Dev Bootcamp he realized how archaic traditional schools are in certain areas. Mr. Carreon asked if Ms. Forman had the same experience. She stated that her program is different than traditional coding, and that soft skills are essential. You have to be able to sell your product to a client. There are a lot of guest speakers who share real world expertise, helping develop these skills. Her program focused on explaining why you chose to go a certain route on a project, and she learned how to articulate their reasoning.

Ms. De La Parra asked about the surveys that students are provided. Mr. Lavin said that General Assembly did daily surveys, and that they had weekly one on one meetings. He saw changes in the classroom from the recommendations that were made in the feedback, and that he appreciated how fast the institution made changes. Ms. Forman agreed, and said that the feedback is acted upon very quickly. She noted that it felt great that the organization was committed to improvement.

Ms. Rust asked if the panelists ran the school, what they would change in the admission process. Mr. Reynolds said that he would be much more selective. He thinks that there is a mindset that everyone can code, and that he believes that it isn't for everyone. Mr. Reynolds believes that Dev Bootcamp needs to be what you want to do, not something that is exploratory. Mr. Lavin said that he would make pre-work mandatory, and that if not completed you would not be allowed to enter the program. He noted that the students that dropped out of his cohort were the ones who did not complete the pre-work. Ms. Forman thinks that the pre-work should be a bit more technical, and focus on specific tools that will be used. She felt overwhelmed during the program in regards to all the different tools, and earlier exposure may have been helpful.

Ms. Rust asked if students without college degrees can be successful in one of these programs. Ms. Forman stated that there was a hair stylist with no college background who was the hardest worker in the cohort. Industry experience can be more valuable than college experience; however, it is more based on your own capacity to learn. Mr. Lavin stated that he doesn't believe there is a difference. There was an individual in his cohort with no college

experience who is a better coder than him. A university gives you a better perspective of the world, but does not necessarily aid you with your skills. Mr. Reynolds agrees with both previous statements, and said that it is more about the desire to be successful.

Ms. Wenzel asked if there was anything they wish they would have known when going into the program. Mr. Reynolds said he was surprised by the breadth of experience of the cohort, and wish he knew more about the other students. He recommended a summary of the average student who will be attending. Mr. Lavin says that more information on outcomes of other cohorts would have been helpful, but he was one of the first cohorts, so data wasn't available. He would not change anything about the program, as he felt the school was very transparent. In that regard he was provided a digital booklet with questions and answers, and that overall he felt prepared when he got on campus. One thing to note though, being an international student on a visa, and with General Assembly not being accredited, he wishes he would have known more about what employment would look like in his scenario. Ms. Forman says that she would have approached the program differently. Initially she resisted aligning herself to the program she was studying, and wishes that she would have embraced it more. She did note that she wouldn't change anything about the program, but more so her approach to the program. Ms. Wenzel asked if there is anything that General Assembly could have done to support with the mindset change. Ms. Forman said no, that there was plenty of support.

Mr. Crawford asked when the panelists were nearing completion of the program, what information did they receive about employment assistance; was it included throughout the program, or closer to completion? Mr. Lavin said that there was someone assigned to the cohort throughout the entire process. General Assembly put them in contact with the company, but it was on the student to sell themselves to the employer. Mr. Reynolds had a very similar experience. There is a week of general career support, and other sessions on resumes, LinkedIn, and talks from previous graduates on things they wish they would have known. There is lots of open communication between students and career staff. Coaching staff tries to mitigate the worry about post program employment; it is seen as a distraction during the program.

Mr. Crawford asked how long it took the panelists to find a job after graduation. Mr. Reynolds said that he received 3-4 offers after he took two weeks off after graduation. Mr. Lavin said that it took him a month. Ms. Forman took about two months to gain employment.

Ms. Wenzel asked if the panel feels that they had to relearn how to learn. Mr. Reynolds said that he wishes he would have done Dev Bootcamp before college. He believes that they focus on learning styles, and how to be an effective learner. Mr. Lavin agreed, stated that you learn how to learn. When you finish you feel that you have the ability to accomplish anything. Ms. Forman said she agreed that it is a very different approach. A lot of what she learned throughout the program was going from analyzing to producing things quickly. Mr. Reynolds followed up saying that you can see a difference between beginners and students near the end of the program, there is a much more analytical mindset.

There were no more questions from the Task Force.

Mr. Crawford asked for public comment. Vicky Bradshaw, California Strategies LLC, noted that a lot of students who graduate don't have the skills to get a job. She wants to ensure that the Task Force protects the consumer, and that they are responsive to the industry. Ms. Bradshaw recommended an expedited approval process for existing schools, and then follow up on in-industry employment rates at six months, year, etc. You can set a benchmark for what the employment rate needs to be, and if a school dips below that they are then subject to additional oversight by the Bureau. This can be done through the Base Wage File that is maintained by the State of California. Mr. Reynolds added that he sees some schools advertising placements rates, creating an expectation amongst students. Some schools may be posting overall placement, but not accurately reflecting employment in the field.

Angela Perry, Public Advocates, requests that the Task Force look at data on job placement rates, and that whether these rates are program specific. She recommends looking at students who washout, who could provide better information on disclosures, outcomes, and in program support. Ms. Forman stated that she feels that she wasn't successful; she feels that she gained skills, but she isn't a success story. She doesn't feel that she is on better financial ground. Ms. Forman said that this is not reflective of the program, but feels she has a lot more work to do on her own as a person. A lot of the burden is on the student to find their own way. There was no further public comment.

Recess for lunch at 11:57 am.

Agenda Item #8 – Employer Graduates Panel – Workforce Demand and Trends

Mr. Crawford reconvened the meeting at 1:08 pm, and then welcomed the panelists and introduced the Task Force. The Panel consists of Kim Girard of Branchbird, Matt Bendett of Peerspace, and Dan Croak of Thoughtbot.

Mr. Crawford asked Mr. Bendett about the skills and abilities that they like to see in graduates. Mr. Bendett stated that they have hired four individuals from General Assembly that have been instrumental to the start of the company. He sees that understanding the evolving nature of the economy, and maximizing your resources (laptop, phone) has led to success. He notes that it is important to understand the position that the graduate plays, and the role within the institution; know that they are a part of a greater whole. Mr. Bendett has noticed that having bootcamp grads with various backgrounds has led to graduates being highly adaptable to their role. Mr. Croak answered the same question stating that they have seen a demand for their services grow, and the need to create and maintain their product as well. A lot of the bootcamp graduates have previous experience (pre-bootcamp), and the technical skills learned in the bootcamp allow them to be effective. Thoughtbot hires bootcamp grads as apprentices for three months before letting them work on their own. Mr. Croak has heard from other companies that sometimes if there isn't an apprenticeship, the bootcamp grads do not perform as well. When they make it through the apprenticeships they develop into a very qualified employee. If they did not recruit from bootcamps they would be closing themselves off from qualified candidates. Ms. Girard stated that Branchbird struggles to find qualified candidates, due to the fact that they work with new software. Graduates from Computer Science programs have a more theoretical approach towards Big Data, which isn't what they are looking for. They need someone who can present to clients and not struggle with deadlines; after that is when they look at technical skills. When they had no luck recruiting, they were recommended to look at Dev Bootcamp. They like that the

graduates are able to learn quickly, and find solutions. It is an effective model given that most employees are dropped into situations that they may not know much about. Branchbird is constantly looking for diverse backgrounds, and skill sets. Dev Bootcamp is Branchbird's go-to source for recruitment.

Ms. Wenzel asked how difficult it is to find individuals with skill sets that they need across the board. Mr. Bendett said it is very difficult, and that is why they work quite often with General Assembly. He feels that there is a need for more bootcamps, not just in tech industry. He also likes how it provides on the job training, versus strictly theoretical. Peerspace needs experts, not apprentices, at the company's current stage. Mr. Bendett also noted that a 9-12 week course may not be enough for students to reach their potential. Ms. Girard stated that they are developing so quickly that they need employees on both ends of the spectrum. Individuals who are qualified coming out of bootcamps are in such high demand, that they often balance multiple offers. They could take on more recent bootcamp grads if they had more senior employees (which are hard to obtain due to startup capital capabilities, and not being able to pay a competitive wage).

Ms. De La Parra asked if there are any common skills that are missing from graduates. Ms. Girard stated that they need multifaceted bootcamp grads. It can't just be developed behind the keyboard; they need to be able to interact with clients. Mr. Bendett agreed with the statement. Employees need to be able to interact not just with customers, but within their own team. They should have social skills, and technical abilities. Mr. Croak stated that graduates are often missing skills for testing programs. Ms. Girard added that it is easier to grow Jr. Members into Managers, because they know how to manage millennials.

Mr. Carreon asked if they exclusively hire millennials. Ms. Girard stated that they will hire anyone. Mr. Bendett agreed that age is not a criterion for hiring; however, what is more important is the social capabilities of the applicant. Can you be collaborative, work with others, but still complete your job? Ms. Girard stated that they would rather hire someone with twenty years of experience that went through a bootcamp, over someone who has not been through a bootcamp seeing as it helps foster an environment of collaboration. Mr. Bendett stated that the grads they hire tend to be self-starters, and highly motivated. They go to a bootcamp to better their career; they have a drive, and passion.

Ms. Simon asked how the programs have sought feedback from employers on criteria that is being taught. Mr. Carreon added onto the question in regards to soft skills as well. Ms. Girard stated that Dev Bootcamp has asked for feedback on grads they have decided for and against hiring. Her San Francisco campus is incorporating the feedback provided by Dev Bootcamp. Mr. Bendett stated that he usually tells General Assembly that more efforts can be done in outreach to see how hired candidates have done, and what they can improve on. A lot of applicants come out of bootcamps, and it may be saturating the talent pool. Mr. Croak thinks most of the bootcamps are doing a good job at teaching a baseline level of knowledge.

Ms. Rust asked what they would look for in a quality school. Mr. Croak noted that the curriculum is similar school to school; it is collaboration that is vital. He also believes that it is critical that bootcamps select their cohorts well. Mr. Bendett stated that using language that companies use is a benefit of a bootcamp, along with the collaborative atmosphere. He also notes that it is important to discover the reason why the individual is applying to go to the bootcamp. They need to be doing it for themselves, not because they are being pushed

into it. Ms. Girard stated that she does not care what technology is being taught, she wants to see self-driven, problem solving, and learning abilities. She wants to see the students create something that isn't based on what they learned in class. They need to be able to check their ego, and be vulnerable. She also wants to see a strong focus on diversity.

Ms. Wenzel asked if the panel hires individuals to be permanent, full time, contract, freelance, etc. Ms. Girard stated that they hire permanent due to the cost of onboarding, training, and the fact that her company experiences difficulty retaining talent. Mr. Bendett stated that they hire on contract if they have doubts on the candidate. They often do this with bootcamp graduates. The contract is typically three month (contract to hire), but they often convert the employee to full time before the three months if qualified. Mr. Croak stated that they hire full time as apprentices, however they are on a much lower salary (this salary increases when the grad is no longer an apprentice and can begin billing clients). Ms. Wenzel followed up by asking if this is common in the industry. Ms. Girard said that contract to hire is common. Mr. Bendett stated that when the employee is on contract to hire they are treated as an employee, not as an outsider.

Ms. De La Parra asked about the ratio of men to women. Ms. Girard stated they have two women on their twelve person staff. Mr. Bendett stated their staff is about 50/50. Mr. Croak stated that in the last three years they have been about 15-30% female.

Mr. Carreon asked if there is still unmet demand for employees. Ms. Girard stated that they are having a difficult time in California meeting their needs. Mr. Bendett agrees, however the supply isn't as qualified as he would hope, even counting the bootcamp grads. Mr. Croak said that it is very competitive in the Bay Area. Their San Francisco team in the last year has had 50% turnover.

There were no further questions from the Task Force, the panel was excused.

There was no public comment.

The Task Force adjourned for a break at 2:28 pm. The meeting reconvened at 2:49 pm.

Agenda Item #9 – Discussion and Consideration of Comments by Former Students and Employer of Graduates Panels

Mr. Carreon stated that he is relieved that what the panelists spoke about relates to the Task Force mandate. Mr. Crawford noted that contract to hire should be included when it comes to reporting gainful employment of graduates. Mr. Carreon inquired if a probationary period means that you are not permanently employed. Ms. Wenzel stated that the probationary periods are considered as ordinary now. Ms. Simon stated that General Assembly tracks contract to hire as a placed job.

Ms. Simon asked if there is different language to use to describe things on the School Performance Fact Sheet (SPFS), as they relate to High Technology Programs. The Task Force suggested bringing in a SPFS expert to the next meeting to discuss potential changes. Ms. Rust noted that in the proposed regulations freelance is addressed in terms of gainful employment.

Mr. Crawford noted that sometimes graduates are hired at a lower salary, and after probation they have a salary increase. He asked if this is something that should be disclosed to prospective students. Mr. Carreon stated that those examples seem to be outliers. Mr. Crawford asked for SPFS information from coding schools, and would like to compare it to other institutions; with the idea that there may need to be additional disclosures in regards to salary ranges for coding schools. Ms. Simon and Mr. Carreon both stated that they think it is not necessary. Ms. Simon also stated that General Assembly has student expectations for the job search process (steps the student must take), and that something of this nature could be added to the SPFS.

Public Comment: Angela Perry stated that she appreciates that there is a lot of discussion around disclosures in the SPFS.

Agenda Item #10 – Discuss Task Force Report Mandated by California Education Code (CEC) section 94880.1

(a). Definition of Key Terms Used in CEC 94880.1 (including but not limited to “innovative subject matters” and “high demand technology fields”)

Discussed on Wednesday; see above.

(b) Contents of Report

i. Recommendations and Findings Related to Student Disclosures [CEC section 94880.1(a)(3)(A)]

It was noted that this agenda item was discussed under Item #8/9.

ii. Recommendations and Findings Related to Reporting Student Outcomes [CEC section 94880.1 (a)(3)(B)]

It was noted that this agenda item was discussed under Item #8/9

iii. Recommendations and Findings Related to State Steps [CEC section 94880.1 (a)(3)(C)]

Mr. Carreon mentioned a potential candidacy process.

Mr. Crawford clarified that coding schools currently have the same application process as all other schools overseen by the Bureau, and wants to know if we are looking at an alternative pathway to approval. Mr. Carreon stated that this should be an option, and we need to look at what that path would be.

Mr. Crawford asked if there are different areas of expertise within the Quality of Education Unit, and if there could be a dedicated group within the Quality of Education Unit that could be assigned to work with these schools.

Ms. Rust added that the goal isn't to exclude these schools, but to limit the time it takes to get approval. She mentioned Peer Review and that the Peer Review can make recommendations to management in regards of applications. Ms. Wenzel noted that this may take away State jobs, and sought clarification on comments that the proposed Program Advisory Committee could be used instead of Quality of Education Unit as an alternative pathway.

Mr. Carreon noted that this would help, but would the six months to a year application timeline still be too long for these schools. Ms. Wenzel stated that the largest bottleneck of application process is incomplete applications, and that it isn't due to Bureau workload. Mr. Carreon again noted New York, and their use of candidacy, allowing the school to operate while an application is in process.

Mr. Crawford asked about the frequency of Licensing Workshops, Ms. Wenzel stated that they are once a month and those rotate geographically. Ms. Simon noted that often times faculty, program, etc. changes can occur during the lengthy application process, which at times can extend the process. Ms. Wenzel noted that there is an opportunity to update this information throughout the process.

Mr. Crawford noted that candidacy should be discussed at the next Task Force meeting.

(c) Drafting of Report, Next Steps, and Timetable

Mr. Carreon motioned to approve the report outline; motion was seconded by Ms. Rust. (Mr. Carreon: Aye; Ms. Rust: Aye; Ms. Simon; Aye; Mr. Crawford: Aye; Ms. De La Parra: Aye). The motion passes.

Mr. Crawford noted that the next meeting will be held August 18th, with an early start. It was also requested that a SPFS expert should speak to the Task Force at the next meeting.

There was no public comment

Agenda Item #11 – Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 3:41 pm.