



NATIONAL COMMISSION ON MILITARY, NATIONAL, AND
PUBLIC SERVICE

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

Subject: Meeting with Organizations Associated with United Way's BoSTEM program
May 9, 2018

The following is a record of a meeting with Commission staff and individuals representing community organizations, corporate managers, volunteers, and Boston Public School partners involved in the BoSTEM program which took place on May 9, 2018 at the United Way of Massachusetts Bay. At the meeting, participants discussed how the United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley, in collaboration with Boston After School & Beyond, Boston Public Schools (BPS), and other corporate partners have designed a STEM program – BoSTEM – that provides hands-on, high-quality learning opportunities, in partnership with out-of-school time programs and corporate volunteers, which give students the chance to apply STEM skills in exciting, real-world contexts. The conversation was facilitated by Mr. Steve Barney, and included four additional Commission members and some members of the staff in attendance. This memorandum is protected by the deliberative process privilege and should be treated as For Official Use Only. This memorandum is not a verbatim transcript of the discussion. Conversation did not drive toward consensus.

Attendees:

- Commissioners: Steve Barney, Avril Haines, Alan Khazei, Mark [Gearan](#)
- Commission Staff: John Lira, Annie Rorem, Keri Lowry, Cristina Flores, and [Kent](#) Abernathy
- External Participants:
 - Joe Rosenbaum, BoSTEM Director, United Way of Massachusetts Bay
 - Lydia Emmons, Associate Director, Sociedad Latina
 - Mallory Haeflich, Program Coordinator, Citizen Schools
 - Kaniah Dixon-Dunn, Civic Engagement VISTA, Citizen Schools
 - Arthur Pearson, Chief Executive Director, Thompson Island Outward Bound Education Center
 - Nikki Tabron, VP of Education, Thompson Island Outward Bound Education Center
 - Karley Ausiello, Senior Vice President of Community Impact, United Way of Massachusetts Bay
 - Sunindiya Bhalla, Senior Director of Educational Success, United Way of Massachusetts Bay
 - Cathleen Finn, New England Corporate Citizenship Manager, IBM
 - Gary Pease, Principle, Nitsch Engineering

Key Takeaways:

- All participants stressed the importance of viewing service as a pathway to emotional, social, and professional ascension. STEM and service opportunities must be presented as a step in a path that leads to professional development.
- It is important to introduce youth to STEM in middle school before they develop a cynical perception to the curriculum and before they solidify their social identity.
- Corporations have an important role to play in youth development beyond philanthropy. STEM professional can create meaningful learning experiences for youth and educators in STEM and other technical proficiencies by volunteering to sharing their expertise and mentor.

Meeting Discussion

Karley Ausiello, a Senior Vice President of Community Impact at United Way of Massachusetts Bay, began the conversation explaining the goal behind the BoSTEM program. The overarching goal when the program began in 2012 was to mitigate an interest gap that existed by providing every middle school student in Boston with a meaningful STEM experience. Ms. Ausiello stated three key (corporate) elements need to be in place to make BoSTEM a success:

1. Relevant Experiences to open kids' eyes about STEM. This includes leveraging corporate partners.
2. Technical Skills Learning Opportunities to ensure K-12 teachers have access to opportunities to learn and teach STEM.
3. STEM Subject Matter Experts to provide out of school time learning opportunities.

These elements are achieved by engaging and leveraging their corporate partners.

Ms. Sunindiya Bhalla, Senior Director of Educational Success at United Way of Massachusetts Bay, mentioned BoSTEM was the only Department of Education grantee program focused on STEM. She restated the goal of BoSTEM was to reach all middle school students both on-campus and outside of campus to round out their experience before heading into high school.

Ms. Mallory Haeflich, a Program Coordinator at Citizen Schools, mentioned a “skills, access, and believe” model. For example, she mentioned how Citizen Schools works with AmeriCorps on coding apprenticeships that build the future workforce.

Mr. Barney asked Ms. Haeflich what she meant by “believe.”

Ms. Haeflich replied that her program invests in emotional and social learning.

Mr. Arthur Pearson, the Chief Executive Director at Thompson Island Outward Bound Education Center, mentioned it is important to engage students at the middle school-level because they (students) are “still full of wonder and not cynics yet.” In middle school students are still developing

their identity. By high school, that have a certain belief about themselves and about STEM and may not be as opening to exploring.

Ms. Ausiello stated students in BoSTEM gain by actually engaging with scientist and other STEM professionals. “Students love interacting with these people.”

Cathleen Finn, the New England Corporate Citizenship Manager at IBM, stated that the program tries addresses the challenge around the beliefs and misconceptions about STEM careers. She pointed out that the jobs current middle school students will have after graduating college do not even exist today. Education must prepare students with soft skills (STEM is a team sport) and rigor that is exciting and challenging. Ms. Finn also mentioned that STEM is gendered and female role models are needed. It is important to not just talk to student about what they are doing, but also about the application in daily life.

Mr. Gary Pease, a Principle at Nitsch Engineering, told the group that only 3% of women entering college choose engineering as a major. At Nitsch Engineering, they host an “Introduce a girl to Engineering Day” and have since hired two girls that have come from that program. Mr. Pease stated he is interested in diversity of the entire engineering field. He tries to get kids interested in engineering not by only doing one activity with them, but by developing a mentee/mentor relationship that could extend to other assistance like applying to college or jobs.

Ms. Bhalla said the students are beginning to see a STEM (career) trajectory. BoSTEM also provides a way to engage affinity groups in companies. This allows for engagement with similar populations. She helps coach and design these experiences with companies. Partner companies also provide externships and STEM learning opportunities for educators, parents, influencers, and out-of-school time staff.

Ms. Finn mentioned how the STEM classes are meant to build on each other. She also mentioned an IBM initiative called [Skills Build](#) that engages 1 million students a year around STEM. People are seeing that what they are doing plays into the broader mission.

Ms. Finn also mentioned IBM’s [Corporate Service Corps](#) (CSC), which she described as the corporate version of the Peace Corps. The CSC is a four-week service program that sends teams of from eight to 15 IBMers to developing parts of the world to partner with government, business and civic leaders in emerging markets to address high-priority issues such as education, health and economic development. Individual CSC teams spend three months learning about the communities and the problems they will address before spending four weeks on the ground working with local organizations and other relevant local.¹ Ms. Finn stated the CSC is not a service opportunity, but rather it is a leadership opportunity. It offers a life changing experience and expands participants’ perspectives. CSC also breaks down barriers that exist in attaining international assignments.

Corporations and community partners as influencers

¹ IBM Corporate Service Corps. Program Details.
<https://www.ibm.com/ibm/responsibility/corporateservicecorps/#details>

Mr. Barney asked, “What is in it for the corporations doing this? Do you want to hire people with skills for the workforce? Why are you targeting people who are not ready to join your workforce?”

Ms. Haeflich replied the corporations use these opportunities and programs to recruit volunteers from their workforce. **Kaniah Dixon-Dunn**, a Civic Engagement VISTA who works with Ms. Haeflich at Citizen Schools, stated volunteer teachers get back more than they are giving; (volunteering) its self-fulfilling.

Mr. Pearson said millennials entering the workforce will demand corporate social responsibility (CSR). Corporations have CSR programs so that they can compete for the workforce of the future.

Mr. Barney asked, “As we look at service and how to reach the youth, who are their influencers? How do you use influencers to change?”

Ms. Lydia Emmons, the Associate Director at Sociedad Latina, mentioned that Sociedad Latina (SL) engages students in middle school, high school, and 2-year colleges. SL tries to cultivate staff through their own participants pipeline. SL uses service to re-engage program graduates into their system. This helps create long-term relationships. Ms. Emmons stated in SL’s demographic (80 percent immigrants) siblings and neighbors are the strongest influencers, which they look up to more than athletes or pop stars. SL connects youth with others who have achieved success through service. They try to do it at an early age so that student fins STEM as they are solidifying their identity.

Mr. Barney asked participants to reflect on the challenges of influencing.

Ms. Finn explained IBM’s [P-Tech 9 – 14 Model](#) which was designed to establish a hiring pipeline to IBM. Service is influenced and incentivized by being part of the community and knowing this is the path you took by being part of the model.

Mr. Barney asked for more on the role of United Way in both the community and in facilitating BoSTEM.

Mr. Joe Rosenbaum, the BoSTEM Director at United Way of Massachusetts Bay, stated the United Way is a convener in the service space. They bring the private and non-profit sectors together and connect the community to corporations. Mr. Rosenbaum mentioned that corporations want to give back, but they are isolated in the service space.

Mr. Barney asked how participants ask corporate partners for help.

Mr. Rahn Dorsey, Chief of education at the Boston Mayor’s Office, said the ‘asks’ need to include well-defined goals and guidance for the corporate partners. These may include specific asks to host externships for teachers or boot camp orientations for students. Some asks imply resources, but most asks imply the sharing of expertise.

Ms. Avril Haines asked participants to reflect on what is being done well in the realm of civic engagement.

Ms. Haeflich described a City Year project that brings law professionals into school to teach students and engage students. The curriculum was set up by an organization called [Discovering Justice](#) and provides students an in-depth look at the court system. A student favorite is the mock trial where students engage in role playing and get to go to court and present the case they were working on. An additional goal is to seek out other employees at law firms that that they can attain a 1:1 ratio of mentoring relationships.

Ms. Ausiello commented how beneficial out-of-school time is for these types of engagements.

Ms. Emmons added the Sociedad Latina has a 6-week summer program called City Redesign. Middle schoolers are assigned a neighborhood and they begin collecting data on it. At the end of the program, the students present the redesign of the neighborhood that makes the city more equitable. Through this process the students learn about a new community and learn STEM principles. For high school kids, civic engagement is successful when it is related to their specific needs and wants and when they can see themselves and their stories in the curriculum. She observed, “It’s all about seeing themselves in the history.”

***Mr. Alan Khazei** asked **Ms. Dixon-Dunn** why she decided to do an AmeriCorps service year.*

Ms. Dixon-Dunn explained she did not plan to do a service year at first. She stated a friend of hers was an AmeriCorps member teaching in schools. Ms. Dixon-Dunn wanted to continue connecting young people to organizations that focus on self-development. She saw the AmeriCorps VISTA announcement with City Year and applied. She liked the education award that would help pay her student loans.

Mr. Dorsey added he has worked on multiple projects with City Year including food stability and Aids work. He added that young people have a “diagnostic lens” that enables them to learn about Boston culture. City Year was the first place the he could “live his values.” Mr. Dorsey said City Year forces people to be more analytic, outgoing, and engaging with people to discuss hard topics. Service is not only about learning, but also about teaching those (AmeriCorps members) what they can do with what they know.

Mandatory national service

***Mr. Barney** asked, “Should there be an obligation [to serve]? To what extent should service be an expectation of citizenship?”*

Ms. Ausiello replied she believes people should have an intensive civic engagement but does not like compulsory service, rather, she wants people to “come to service.”

Ms. Emmons agreed that there is “something there” about a universal service year. She was an AmeriCorps VISTA alumna and benefited from the skills professional development experience. Ms. Emmons entered her service year after graduating from college and the other people in her corps all

had college degrees. They used AmeriCorps as a gap year after college before finding full-time employment. She thinks it is a great way for 18 – 19-year-olds to learn skills and gain experience. She believes a service year should be available for all those who will benefit from it.

Mr. Mark Gearan commented there is no commonalities that bring the public together. He asked whether participants think service would be a healing dimension to the current climate.

Ms. Ausiello mentioned Robert Putnam’s book *Bowling Alone* and stated that people are increasingly isolated. She believed there is something to service bringing people together, but they should not be compelled to do so. She asked, “How do we do it in a way that really brings people together?”

Mr. Khazei suggested the group not think of universal service as 2 million people, but rather as a community. Can this community get 5,000 kids to serve?

Participants largely agreed.

Ms. Finn commented the development of unpaid internships was “dastardly” because it added to class stratification. If you are doing something for someone, you deserve to get paid. Participants in service must realize that service is based on connections and social capital. The draft equal inequity. Ms. Finn asked, how do we make sure there is fairness in the (service) assignments? She suggested a G.I. Bill for civilians. People must view service as a part of a pathway to other opportunities, not just service for the sake of service. That is how you attain buy-in.

Ms. Dixon-Dunn commented mandatory (service) does not mean equitable. The commission must be mindful of the of the different needs of the young people before entering service year to avoid placing them in opportunities they might not be ready for. This might do more harm than good for the people of organization receiving the assistance.

Ms. Bhalla commented service does not have to be an either-or choice. It needs to be thought about as a part of a pathway.

Ms. Emmons asked about universal service - where are they going and how is that organization prepared to support them. Before placing people in service opportunities it must be ensured that organizations can provide the infrastructure and meaningful projects to support the experience.

Mr. Khazei asked Ms. Emmons how many people her organization would be able to accept and how the organization might ask them to serve.

Ms. Emmons replied with a goal expanding high school readiness by being in all Boston Public School high schools. Her organization would need approximately 20 – 30 more Corps members in order to scale their existing program to meet this goal. Sociedad Latina currently serves over 1,000 immigrants with a staff of thirteen. They currently have no AmeriCorps funding.

Ms. Finn asserted there is a supervision element to scaling the number of volunteers that should not be overlooked. **Mr. Barney** agreed, stating service is not a “make work” program. The cost of oversight needs to be figured into it.

Mr. Dorsey added the breadth of the definition of service and how long you will have to service are information to the equation. He recommended we give students the opportunity to determine when service (year) makes sense for them to do. He asked at what point does universal service overlap with post-secondary attainment. For example, people completing service should be recognized for that through service orientated degrees and certifications.