



FIU Embrace-External Advisory Council Meeting Minutes

Monday, October 16th 2017

External Advisory Council Members

Albert Lopez, Southeast Assurance Regional Managing Partner, BDO USA, LLP

Andres Gil, VP of Research and Dean of the University Graduate School, FIU

Andrew Sagona, Founder, Disability Rights Law Association

Anthony Gonzalez, Chief of Surgery, Baptist Hospital of Miami

Brenda Lampon, Area Director, Vocational Rehabilitation

Cuong Do, Executive VP and Head of Global Strategy, Samsung Electronics America

Kenneth Furton, Provost and Executive Vice President, FIU

Yogi Hernandez Suarez, FIU and CMO, Care Delivery Organization of Humana

Telephonic

Milton Vescovacci (Chair), Shareholder, Gray Robinson, P.A.

Attendees

Alberto Fernandez, Principal, SPED Outreach, Miami-Dade County Public Schools

Angel Rodriguez, Parent

Christopher Chin, Parent

Daniel O Perez, Program Assistant, FIU Embrace

Deborah Dietz, Executive Director, Disability Independence Group

Edgardo Morales, Business Relations Representative, Vocational Rehabilitation

Elizabeth Alvite, Administrative, FIU Embrace

Ernie Martinez, Independent Living Advocate

Hayed Kure, Congressman Curbelo's Office

Janet McDaniel, Adjunct Lecturer, FIU

John Ortuzar, President, Access for Autism

Karlynn Emile, Special Olympics Florida

Katerina Bryant, Community Relations Manager, Governmental Relations, FIU

Kelli Hunter-Sheppard, District Director, Miami-Dade County Public Schools

Lester Rovirosa, Manager of Administrative Services, FIU Embrace

Maggie Marrero-Neville, Transition Specialist, MDCPS

Marlaina Maddux, Research Assistant, School of Social Work, FIU

Mavara Mirza-Agrawal, Medical Director, FIU Embrace

Nicole Attong, Director, FIU Embrace

Ondina Rodriguez, Program Coordinator Project Panther LIFE, MDCPS

Patricia Ramirez, Program Specialist, SPED Outreach, MDCPS

Rumi Agarwal, Doctoral Student, FIU

Shanna Burke, Assistant Professor, FIU

Vivian Nunez, Instructional Supervisor, MDCPS

Vivian Puig, Parent

Call to Order

The Chair convened a meeting of the FIU Embrace External advisory Council at 2:05 p.m. on Monday, October 16, 2017 at Modesto Maidique Campus, MARC Pavilion in Miami Florida. Chair Hernandez Suarez invited the Council and members of the audience to introduce themselves and identify their affiliation.

Review & Acceptance of Minutes

The Chair requested a motion to approve the August 15, 2017 minutes. Milton Vescovacci put forth a motion to approve the minutes as presented. Albert Lopez seconded the motion. The minutes were unanimously approved, and accepted.

Ms. Attong introduced two community members to be considered for membership to the Council. Andrew Sagona, Founder of Disability Rights Law Association, and graduate of FIU's College of Law. Dr. Anthony Gonzalez, Chief of Surgery for Baptist Hospital of Miami. He is also a faculty member at FIU's College of Medicine and has a son attending the Project Panther LIFE program. A program that was newly integrated with FIU Embrace. Ms. Attong also informed the Council that Brenda Lampon has replaced Cynthia Gaber's as the Area 6's Director of Vocational Rehabilitation. As such, Mrs. Lampon will replace Cynthia Gaber on the Council.

Council Gap Analysis - Follow-up Discussion

Dr. Burke provided a response to two questions that were asked at the previous meeting. The questions arose from a presentation/discussion around housing and the need or unmet needs of individuals and for types models that are available to address those needs. The first question was related to cost of care, and the second to quality of life.

- 1. Why are certain types of residential settings spending and/or costing less per person than others?*

In the previous discussion Dr. Burke shared information that demonstrated the types of housing that is available through state programs, medicade/medicare wavier and other funding sources. In addition, a comparison of the United States and Florida expenditures were reviewed. Dr. Burke reviewed the cost of care by state and noted that families appear to be covering a larger portion of the fiscal burden when caring for their son/daughter with developmental disabilities. In addition, there appears to be a shift where states were once prohibited from funding an individual who wishes to live in the home with the family members, the state appears to be more open to this choice by the individual. Another policy that may have had an impact on the cost per care is the money follow the person initiative.

This program is available in 32 states, and appear to address the question of why are services potentially costing less as the number of people decrease in the setting? The finding from this program suggest when transitioning someone into a community-integrated setting which has less than six people with intellectual disability in the same home there is a savings in healthcare cost. These individuals did not require the same intensity of services they thought or were told they needed. Therefore, there was a decrease in healthcare cost. Also, there is not as many infrastructure costs, therefore the

overall cost of care is reduced. In general, the program has estimated a saving of \$48,000 annually.

2. *How is quality of life impacted?*

Dr. Burke indicated that quality of life can be measured in a variety of ways. Some variables that have been used to measure quality of life include depressive symptoms or a lack of an assistive aide. The report discussed during the last meeting explored this issue across the variety of care needs, and across a variety of cognitive statuses. The study focused on depressive symptoms as one marker of quality of life across the variety of care needs, and across a variety of cognitive statuses. The findings demonstrated that across all cognitive groups and every level of care depressive symptoms decrease with community integrated living. This is just one marker that can be used to measure quality of life.

Legislative Update

Ms. Attong informed the Council that Vice President of Governmental Relations Michelle Palacio, was unable to attend the meeting. However, the following update was provided.

Prior to this meeting there has only been one committee meeting. Therefore, there are no substantive changes. In addition Ms. Bryant, a representative from Mrs. Palacio's office advised that the next Council meeting will be held during session therefore Mrs. Palacio may not be present. However, it is anticipated that there will be more of an update to provide the Council.

In addition, Dr. Gil shared that we will continue to work on securing funding for the second year of the Project Panther PLUS program with the goal of maintaining the current funding levels. However, if there are cuts, we will develop a contingency plan. Dr. Gil also stated it is important that some changes be made to the program in order to be more responsive to the State regarding outcomes for both Projects Panther LIFE and PLUS.

Employment Conference

Milton Vescovacci, Chair of the Employment Committee provided an update of the Employment Conference. The purpose of the Conference is to raise awareness of the need of employment for individuals with intellectual and/or other developmental disabilities, to share with other organizations how to either initiate the process of hiring individuals with developmental disabilities or sharing strategies for expanding their current initiative. We will also, issue a call to action to galvanize support and greater interest in the employment industry in this areas. Mr. Vescovacci shared that Ms. Attong, Mr. Ripak and himself will be visiting the Walgreens warehouse in Connecticut

to meet with representatives of the organization, and discuss how the initiative is being implemented in various warehouses nationwide.

Albert Lopez asked if there was a save the date created so the Council members can distribute; Nicole advised the agenda and save the date will be disbursed to the Council once they are completed and approved by the Chair.

Cuong Do shared that one of the points of the Conference is to get 70% of youth who are not employed to become employed. However, the challenge lies within the employers. He indicated that one organization is using seed grants from social security for pilot projects aimed at increasing interships for individuals, which ultimately makes the individual more employable, versus the same individual being unemployed using disability funds. This will allow the individual to begin paying taxes once employed. Cuong advised it would be important to have this research displayed, and advised he will connect Ms. Attong to the organization for the policy portion of the Conference.

Panther LIFE and PLUS Update

Dr. Burke and Ms. Attong provided an overview of Project Panther LIFE/PLUS, the evaluation of the programs and discussed the integration of LIFE and PLUS with FIU Embrace. See attached presentation.

As a result of the integration, Dr. Burke is the Principal Investigator (PI), while Ms. Attong manages the administrative and programmatic components of the LIFE and PLUS programs. Moreover, Dr. Burke will continue working on previously established projects with FIU Embrace.

LIFE & PLUS Evaluation

Dr. Burke indicated that FIU's LIFE and PLUS programs are a part of Florida Consortium on Inclusive Higher Education (FCIHE), with the University of Central Florida being lead. The Consortium has applied for and received a Transition and Post-Secondary Programs for Students with Intellectual Disabilities (TPSID) grant. The TPSID grant is funded by the Department of Education. The funds are awarded to the University of Central Florida, and a sub award is given to FIU. It is a 5-year research based grant from October 1, 2015-September 30, 2020 that focuses on the functionality of programs. Dr. Gil indicated that this work is important to the program in terms of research and reporting outcomes to the State. Moreover, Provost Furton added that it is important to the University to have richly diverse student body, not just in race, gender, orientation etc. but it is also important to have diverse array of individuals with disabilities on our campus.

Ms. Attong discussed the vision for the future for both programs is to improve the quality of the programs to acquire Comprehensive Transition and Post-Secondary Program status. This will allow families and youth to access other types of funding streams for attendance, and Federal recognition. In addition, we are working on

improving our collaboration with M-DCPS, moving towards a certificate based program, adding residential life and strengthening the life skills of our students.

Questions and Comments:

Anthony Gonzalez suggested that every family needs to be aware of the programmatic changes, and suggested that we host two town hall meetings through which information could be shared with families. Ms. Attong indicated that her office was working with Dr. Burke to schedule those meetings as soon as possible. Dr. Gil stated that the meetings must include Miami-Dade County Public School as well as personnel from partners.

Milton asked if there was an update on the website redesign. Ms. Attong informed the Council that the work on the website will be initiated once we have secured the staff. A new staff member is being transferred into the department within the next two weeks and an estimated launch date for the updated website would be identified. Yogi Hernandez Suarez suggested that FIU Embrace's website should be placed "closer" to front of the University's main page to allow for greater visibility. Ms. Attong will explore this option and report back to the Council.

Albert Lopez shared that the Autism Speaks Gala was a success with key attendees which included Congresswoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, and Harve Mogul, President Emeritus of United Way of Miami-Dade. In addition, Mr Lopez reiterated the need to utilize research and the conference to raise public awareness around the issue of employment.

Given the recent impact of hurricane Irma on our community, Cuong Do asked about the wellbeing of the students in the program. Yogi advised at the next meeting an update will be provided on the students and the learners within the program.

Parent Nicholas Chin shared he would like an update on the Panther PLUS program and the status of the second year as there is poor communication on the status of the program. Moreover, he is concerned for the participants in the program. The Chair assured a meeting would be organized to provide parents with an update on the students and the program changes.

Parent Vivian Puig asked if the current cap on the age limit for the Panther PLUS program that will extend to 28 years old? Ms. Puig is aware that the DMF program accepts students through the age of 28. The Chair explained that some of the age restrictions within each program are dictated by statute, others by how the grants are written. Ms. Attong indicated that the PLUS program was designed for students through 26 years old, and there is no plan to expand the age limit. Dr. Gil further explained that there have been no discussions to expanding the age restrictions of the programs.

Parent Angel Rodriguez shared he is distraught due to the minimal communication regarding the changes in the program. Mr. Rodriguez raised the following questions: What were the various changes and transitions occurring to both of the programs, and whether next semester is guaranteed as it is each student's right as an adult to make a decision for their life and future? Mr. Rodriguez also expressed his gratitude for being able to attend the External Advisory Council meeting to voice concerns regarding the programs.

Ms. Attong took full responsibility for the lack of communication between the program and families since the transition. She indicated that an update on the transition, and staffing was provided at a parent and student meeting where she and Dr. Gil discussed the transition, legislative challenges facing the program, and upcoming programmatic changes. In addition, Ms. Attong indicated that she has not yet reached out to families as she is in the hiring process and waiting on additional information from the legislature.

Mr. Rodriguez explained that the students within the programs must be treated like adults and given the information regarding the changes, specifically enrollment and registration.

Ms. Attong agreed with Mr. Rodriguez's feedback, and indicated that she meets with the LIFE students every morning, and PLUS students in the afternoon providing an update on the programmatic changes, addressing any questions they may, and getting their feedback as where the program can be strengthened. All students have my email and cellular phone number, and know where my office is. The goal is to provide as much support as possible to the students throughout this transition. Ms. Attong apologized for the length of time it has taken to make the transition. It is anticipated that the transition period will continue until we are staff and all components of the programs are fully implemented.

Adjourn

The Chair requested a motion to adjourn the meeting. Milton Vesco vaci put forth a motion to adjourn the meeting. Cuong Do seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved and the meeting adjourned at 3:25 p.m.