



**DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES
BUREAU OF ENTERPRISE SYSTEMS AND TECHNOLOGY**

1:00 – 3:00 PM

MINUTES

June 7, 2021

Commission Members in Attendance

Raymond, Mark — Commission Chair and Chief Information Officer, DAS-BEST
Mundrane, Michael — Vice President for Information Technology and Chief Information Officer, University of Connecticut (UCONN)
Caruso, Nick — Senior Staff Associate, Connecticut Association of Boards of Education
Casey, Doug — Executive Director, CT Commission for Educational Technology
Cohen, Burt — Staff Attorney, Office of Consumer Counsel
Dillon, Tom — Independent (Minority Leader of the House)
Dumais, Charles — Executive Director, Cooperative Educational Services (C.E.S.) (Office of the Governor)
Elsesser, John — Town Manager, Town of Coventry (CT Council of Small Towns)
Gopalakrishnan, Ajit — Chief Performance Officer, Connecticut State Department of Education
Mavrogeanes, Richard — Discover Video (President Pro Tem of the Senate)
Provencher, Maura — Vice President of Research and Administration, Connecticut Conference of Independent Colleges (CCIC)
Schander, Deborah — State Librarian, Connecticut State Library
Stanco, Bart — Vice President, Gartner (Office of the Governor)
Stephanou, Stephen — Deputy General Manager, Town of Manchester (CT Conference of Municipalities)
Vallieres, Kelli-Marie — Executive Director, Office of Workforce Strategy (Department of Economic and Community Development)
Williams, Holly — Section Director, Education and Workforce Development, Office of Policy and Management (OPM)
Zak, Scott — Senior Director of Learning Technologies, Board of Regents

Others in Attendance

Dantos, Evan — Robinson + Cole
Kocsondy, Ryan — Director, Connecticut Education Network (CEN)
Racamato, Victoria — Assistant to the State Chief Information Officer, DAS-BEST



Welcome

At approximately 1:00 PM, Chair Mark Raymond called the meeting to order. He remarked on the eventful school year coming to a close and thanked the members in attendance — both through their roles as Commission members and in their organizations — to make learning possible for their students of all ages.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

The Commission members had received [the minutes of the March 1, 2021 meeting](#) in advance, and Mark welcomed a motion to approve the document. Nick Caruso made a motion to approve the minutes, with a second from Burt Cohen. With no discussion or revisions, the members approved the document. Kelli Vallieres and Rich Mavrogeanes abstained from the vote, given their absence from the March 1 meeting.

Commission Staff

Mark introduced the next topic, the need for an additional staff position to the Commission, by sharing some background on personnel. For several years, the Commission did not have an Executive Director, which limited the group's ability to do much more than oversee the Connecticut Education Network (CEN). Following this period, members pursued funding to reinstate the position, with many positive outcomes since, including the development of a statewide educational technology Strategic Plan and gains in the areas of privacy, digital learning standards, and digital equity. Mark noted the opportunity now to bring even more value to the state's education community through an additional staff member and welcomed a discussion on the topic. He referenced a [draft position description](#) shared prior to the meeting.

A number of members expressed support for the creation of a new position, including Nick Caruso, Burt Cohen, Tom Dillon, John Elsesser, Ajit Gopalakrishnan, Bart Stanco, and Kelli Vallieres. John asked about a funding source, and Mark mentioned several options: short-term pandemic funds, CEN member support, or a longer term appropriation through next year's short legislative session. Each would bring its own set of challenges, and he did not suggest adopting any particular approach during this discussion.

Among the possible benefits of a second position, Nick underscored the importance of affording the Executive Director the ability to focus on strategic planning, advocacy, and policy work. He appreciated Doug's work on program design and implementation but noted the limits of one person to address both strategic and tactical concerns. He



suggested a possible partnership or shared position with the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE), as was the case with past Executive Director Karen Kaplan. Burt highlighted the potential to support digital equity efforts through the Commission as part of a holistic, inter-agency approach to staff this work. He called attention to a [New York Times article](#) on how many disenfranchised communities continue to depend on broadband for blended and remote learning as well as healthcare needs. Mark echoed this point, as he looks at potential gaps in delivery across agency services.

Tom pointed to measurable outcomes of the proposed, new position in the form of E-rate adoption and associated cost savings to schools and libraries. Bart agreed with this point, making the business case for a new position in terms of impact, cost savings, and other quantifiable measures.

Ajit supported the position and called for continued alignment between the Commission's work and that of the CSDE, which sets policy across all aspects of education: curriculum, instruction, assessment, accountability, talent, certification, etc. The work of the new position would support general policy goals as well as emerging areas, such as remote and blended learning. He noted the existing strong partnership with Doug in areas such as digital equity and privacy. He also recognized the potential benefit of dedicated resources to address the complex and multi-faceted challenges of supporting online and blended learning. Mark expressed his appreciation for the work of Ajit and the CSDE and the strong relationship between the CSDE and Commission.

Kelli tied current and future efforts of the Commission to her efforts in leading the Office of Workforce Strategy and role as Vice Chair of the Governor's Workforce Council. She addressed the need to link learning to career pathways, with opportunities for students to gain digital literacy skills and earn industry certifications. She encouraged Commission members to review the State's [Workforce Strategic Plan](#), with strong ties to the work of this group, and pledged to continue working closely with the Commission and CSDE. Mark thanked Kelli for her comments and suggested the Commission engage in a crosswalk of its work with that of the Workforce Council. He concluded the discussion by acknowledging the broad support to pursue a second staff position to serve the Commission and welcomed member input on funding options.



Proposed Endorsement Policy Revisions

The next topic on the agenda addressed updates to the Commission's [Policy on Third-Party Endorsements](#), details of which Doug provided. A number of organizations have approached Mark and Doug with requests to post links to their remote learning resources from the Commission's Web site. While some of these materials may prove valuable to educators and leaders, the sheer volume of requests has proved challenging to address.

The [proposed, revised policy](#) includes several changes, most notably a section on eligibility. The new language limits endorsements to educational institutions and professional organizations with a mission to promote teaching and learning. These updates should help clarify the types of initiatives and resources the Commission can support.

Mark thanked Doug for the overview and justification for the revisions and opened the floor for member comments and questions. He noted that outside the Commission there exist many communities of practice where individuals and organizations can share resources. Deborah Schander supported the changes. As the State Librarian, she receives similar requests and acknowledged the need to set clear boundaries as to the types of support an agency or institution can provide. Kelli and John echoed these sentiments, citing the need to draw clear lines around endorsements.

Following the discussion, Mark welcomed a motion to approve the revised language. John made the motion, and Kelli seconded. The full Commission unanimously approved the new Policy on Third-Party Endorsements.

Report of the Executive Director

Doug provided highlights from his previously shared [Executive Director's Report](#), with a continued focus on supports for digital equity, remote learning, and open education resources:

- Accelerate CT
The CSDE recently announced a set of initiatives termed "[Accelerate CT](#)," funded by the American Rescue Plan (ARP), to support education recovery and acceleration. This framework has multiple components, including the strategic use of technology. Ajit, who is leading this work with input from Doug and other state leaders, underscored the theme of capacity building for teachers and



administrators. He pledged to share more details around the plan in the coming weeks.

- **Future of Technology Commission Town Hall**
On June 22, The Office of the Governor, CSDE, and Commission will host a town hall as part of a series of events for the [Future of Technology Commission](#). This independent body is charged with gathering input and providing policy recommendations to the White House, Congress, and Federal Communications Commission on the effective and equitable use of technology. The Connecticut event will feature remarks from national leaders as well as panel discussions among state educators on digital equity and the use of technology to support innovation in teaching and learning.
- **Closing the Digital Divide**
Doug provided an overview of two federal programs designed to support Internet access. Launched in late April, the Emergency Broadband Benefit (EBB) provides credits to offset the cost of broadband to an estimated 170,000 households in Connecticut. The Emergency Connectivity Fund (ECF) serves essentially as an extension of E-rate outside of school. With a filing window to begin June 29, ECF will allow schools and libraries to request funding to support connectivity solutions for students and patrons at home. Doug welcomed the availability of funding through both programs, though he noted the funding limits and "one-time" nature of each.

To ensure that students in need of broadband stay connected for remote and blended learning, the Everybody Learns initiative will continue through the 2021 – 22 school year. He thanked Office of Policy and Management (OPM) Secretary Melissa McCaw and Holly Williams for committing the CARES Act funds necessary to continue the program.

- **Open Education Resources**
Progress continues on the development of [Go Open CT](#) to support the creation, curation, and sharing of high-quality, standards-aligned learning materials for schools and universities. Doug expected a beta release of the site in early July and formal launch to align with the start of the school year this fall. In the meantime, Doug has been working with the CSDE to import academic standards approved by the State Board of Education as well as content collections into the site. He thanked Chip Dumais and CAPSS for providing a forum to build awareness of this work and to engage district leaders around the most effective use of the site for collaborative curriculum development.



- **Legislative Session**
Doug concluded his updates by thanking members for their commitment to reinstating teachers and school leader positions to the Commission. Discussions in past Commission meetings led to the drafting of statutory changes through the Department of Administrative Services in the form of [HB 6573](#). The bill would reinstate former Commission positions appointed by CAPSS; the Connecticut Educators Computer Association; and Connecticut's two teachers' unions, the Connecticut Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers – Connecticut. That bill became part of [HB 6444](#), "An Act Concerning the Modernization of State Services and the Membership of the Commission for Educational Technology," and was on its way to Governor Lamont's desk for signing into law.

Doug also mentioned [HB-6442](#), the Governor's broadband bill, which has passed the House following significant revisions.

Mark thanked Doug for the updates. He noted the other benefits that accrue with getting households with students online, including access to telemedicine, state services, and other resources.

Digital Learning Advisory Council Report

Following Doug's updates, Mark invited Nick Caruso, chair of the Commission's Digital Learning Advisory Council, to report on that group's activities. Nick reminded members of the discussion taking place at the March 1 Commission meeting to solicit input on the types of practices that schools and universities may want to continue after the need for full-time remote learning ends. At that time, members supported the idea, which the Advisory Council addressed at its [April 26 meeting](#). That discussion among K – 12, library, and adult education experts led to the finalization of a prompt that anyone in the education community will be able to respond to:

"What about school during the pandemic is worth keeping as we return to in-person education?"

Nick noted the intentional choice of language to solicit a broad range of responses. The platform for individuals to submit responses and rank those that others have offered is known as Thought Exchange. Nick thanked Advisory Council member Jonathan Costa of EdAdvance for proposing the original concept and hosting the Thought



Exchange prompt. By the September 13 Commission meeting, Nick expected to have the results of the prompt for review and consideration for future policy recommendations.

He concluded his report by briefly noting other topics from the April 26 Advisory Council meeting, including discussions around equitable broadband access and open education resources. With no questions or discussion from other members, Mark thanked Nick for his updates and called on Tom Dillon to cover highlights from the Infrastructure Advisory Council.

Infrastructure Advisory Council Report

Tom touched on several topics from the April 23 Infrastructure Advisory Council meeting, [minutes of which](#) appear on the Commission meeting page. The theme of digital equity played prominently in the Advisory Council meeting, with members discussing the best ways to reach individuals who may be eligible for the EBB program.

Tom also highlighted the ongoing work of expanding Internet access through Eduroam and noted the success of the May 13 CEN Conference session on this topic. Dozens of leaders from schools, universities, and libraries attended the breakout, which featured speakers from New Haven Public Schools, Southern Connecticut State University, CEN, and the Commission to share lessons on the successful rollout of Eduroam in New Haven. He expressed enthusiasm for the continued expansion of Eduroam in Connecticut through the substantial plans to increase community wireless through Governor Lamont's [proposal for use of the federal COVID-19 ARP funding](#).

Mark thanked Tom for his brief and informative updates and turned the meeting over to Ryan for his report on CEN.

CEN Updates

Ryan had shared his [quarterly report](#) with Commission members in advance of the meeting and highlighted several areas of interest. Mitigation against distributed denial of service (DDoS) attacks remains a core benefit to CEN member institutions, with a nearly 20 percent increase in incidents since last year. The service helps all members, including those that have recently connected through CEN through the CT Library Fiber Consortium and the Judicial Branch initiatives.



As Tom referenced earlier, the success of Eduroam in New Haven stands as a model for other communities. The Governor's ARP plan extends the work underway through Everybody Learns and includes the rollout of Eduroam to all future community access points. For this work, CEN would engage with Internet2 for design assistance. Ryan underscored the strong reporting that Eduroam provides, including where students get online at other locations as well as guest access on institutions' networks. These insights will help with the challenge of measuring connectivity needs outside of school.

Eduroam served as the topic of a breakout session during the recent 2021 CEN Conference. Ryan described the event as a great success, especially given that the event was virtual rather than in person, and he pointed to the strong peer-to-peer sharing that took place across sessions.

The CEN team recently began "[Member Spotlights](#)," case studies that highlight innovative work that leverages the CEN connections and community. The first two pieces provide details around the construction of Central Connecticut State University's [eSports gaming center](#), connected by CEN circuits, as well as the collaborative work with the Capitol Region Education Council (CREC) and Tilson to connect the [Open Hearth shelter](#) in Hartford to support job training and employment services.

Ryan concluded his remarks by directing members to the [Minds We Need](#) thought paper. The work of dozens of researchers went into the document, which advocates for federal funding to support research and education networks as hubs of innovation and workforce preparation.

Mark welcomed comments and questions, with John raising concerns around cyber security for towns. He shared that the Connecticut Interlocal Risk Management Agency ([CIRMA](#)) would no longer offer cyber insurance through its core policy offering and is referring municipalities to other carriers for this coverage. His town, Coventry, has purchased additional, third-party cybersecurity services in order to get coverage. Mark noted discussions at the national level to explore protections through any .GOV entity, volume purchases for towns and schools, and other solutions. He underscored the need to provide services not only to protect against intrusions but also to make institutions eligible to purchase cyber insurance. Ryan noted the contracts that CEN has brokered with iBoss and Securly, solutions driven by member need.



Public Comment

Following the CEN report, Mark issued a call for public comment, with none given.

Scheduled 2021 Meeting Dates

Mark opened the possibility of a hybrid format for future gatherings, given the significant reduction in COVID-19 cases, and shared the remaining scheduled meeting dates for the year:

- Monday, September 13
- Monday, December 6

Adjournment

With no further questions or discussion, Mark called for a motion to adjourn. Rich provided the motion, Burt the second, and the members voted unanimously to conclude the meeting at approximately 2:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

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A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Douglas Casey". The signature is written in a cursive style.