

# **AmeriCorps NCCC Advisory Board Retreat**

**December 7, 2010**

**1201 New York Avenue, NW**

**Washington, DC 20525**

## **Meeting Minutes**

### **Attendance:**

#### **The following members of the advisory board were present:**

Kate Becker, Chair

Steven Dow, Advisory Board Member – via telephone

Elizabeth Hartsell, Advisory Board Member, Alumni Representative, via telephone

Mikel Herrington, Director, AmeriCorps NCCC

Antonio Perez, Advisory Board Member

J. Steven Rhodes, Ambassador – Advisory Board Member

Tiffany Zapico, Advisory Board member, Alumni Representative

Rex Linder, Advisory Board Member

John Phillips, Advisory Board Member

#### **The following federal representatives were present:**

Alex Amparo, Senior Advisor, FEMA

Roxana Barillas, Deputy Director, USDA Center for Faith-based & Neighborhood Partnerships

Ernie Gonzales, Department of Defense

Ray Rivera, Department of Interior

Marlise Streitmatter, Department of Transportation

Ali Zaidi, Special Assistant, Department of Energy

#### **The following NCCC Staff was present:**

Charles Davenport, Director of Projects and Partnerships

Nick Zefran, Director, Member Services

Erin Dahlin, Director of Policy and Operations

Dan Milnes, North Central Region Campus Director

Barbara Lane, Southwest Region Campus Director

José Phillips, Pacific Region Campus Director

Gary Turner, Southern Region Campus Director

LaQuine Roberson, Atlantic Region Campus Director

Colleen Clay, Assistant Director of Projects and Partnerships

Kelly DeGraff, Acting Senior Advisor for Disaster

Jennifer Veazey, Special Assistant

Corinne Keel, Program Associate

Katrina Mathis, Assistant Director of Projects & Partnerships  
 Jody Bums, AmeriCorps NCCC North Central Region  
 Tim Staub, Selection and Placement Assistant  
 Erma Hodge, Advisory Board Liaison

**The following CNCS Staff was present:**

John Gomperts, Director, AmeriCorps State

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**Welcome and Introductions (by Kate Becker, Chair) (8:45 a.m.)**

Chairwoman Becker began by acknowledging the hard work done by the NCCC staff. She mentioned that the Board would talk about the June meeting date so that people have plenty of time to plan around it.

Introductions of participants were made.

**Director's Update (by Mikel Herrington, NCCC Director)**

Mr. Herrington discussed some of the developments in the program overall and some of the priorities for the program this year.

In terms of the continued priority with NCCC partnership and federal representatives, we are hoping to expand this year and we see this as a way of really strengthening our program. NCCC is the only program within the Corporation that has a statutorily-established advisory board, and on that board are statutorily established ex-officio members from each of the 13 federal agencies. We were developed with the idea of being a flexible resource that could partner easily with other agencies.

This is a very important year for the NCCC because we are at the cusp of strong growth and solidifying our position as an integral piece of the Corporation's portfolio. To do this for 2011, there are four overarching priorities that we are going to be focusing on as a staff, and that the board will help guide us through in ways that can strengthen these priorities. These programmatic priorities will lead to long-term sustainability of the program and make us a more effective resource.

(1) In April of 2010, CEO Patrick Corvington made the decision to move the Corporation's coordination of Disaster Services under the auspices of the NCCC. The Gulf Oil spill caused the NCCC to take on a larger coordinating role than the Corporation had yet experienced. Over the next year, there will be a challenge and an opportunity to see how we can grow our expertise in the Disaster Services field and strengthen our partnerships. It will demonstrate that the NCCC has a place within this agency that is beyond strictly the limitations or confines of our programmatic campus work.

(2) The Corporation is going through a process of developing new performance measures. We have a strategic plan being developed that will be voted on by the board in February. Once that is in place, we will have performance measures for all of the programs to demonstrate the impact and value of service in a host of areas. In April we started working to develop test performance measures for the program. We are looking at what the real impacts are of the activities being funded through federal dollars. We have been in close collaboration with OMB, looking at programmatic performance measures, the service impact of what we do in communities, and the impact on members.

(3) We had a new statutory target within the Serve America Act to diversify our corps, specifically along the lines of increased numbers from disadvantaged circumstances as participants. We have been very aggressive in setting up partnerships with other federal programs in terms of both recruiting a more diverse corps and supporting that corps once they're in our program. These are two challenges we will be working on in 2011. At the end of 2012 we will begin reporting to Congress on our progress in these areas.

(4) The NCCC Optimization Plan. We have won the support of Congress and our appropriations committees. NCCC will realize the cost efficiencies we have and use the resources we have because of our high fixed costs. NCCC has been severely under-enrolled given the size of our facilities, not because of demand. We have many more applications than we can fill. Our argument has been that if we can invest a little more money into the program to increase enrollment, we will gain a lot more efficiencies and it will bring our cost per member down. The Senate has approved an increase in 2011 that would allow us to fully enroll at least one or two of our campuses. If we do not get the increase, we will have to demonstrate with whatever appropriation we have that we are making the best use of our funds.

### **CNCS Disaster Services Briefing (by Kelly DeGraff, Acting Senior Advisor for Disaster Services)**

Disaster Services was not included in the Corporation's 2006 and 2010 strategic plan; it was actually listed as a component that went under increasing volunteers. It was not a real focus area for the Corporation. After Katrina and Rita occurred we put into action the national service participants and elevated the Corporation's role within Disaster Services in 2007. At the same time, the Corporation board voted to add Disaster Services as a fifth focus to the Corporation's strategic plan. The Corporation's role in Disaster Services was an ebb and flow, depending on being reactionary and based on what was occurring at specific times in the disaster world.

Most recently, Disaster Services was focused on the Serve America Act, when Congress established that the NCCC was no longer a pilot program but an actual program defined by a purpose to respond to natural and other disasters. In June, we discussed the merging functions of the Corporation's Office of Emergency Management into the NCCC. We were focused on several major operational areas that the Corporation asked NCCC to take on: managing partnerships, managing communication, and managing deployments.

The Gulf Oil Spill, again, peaked the interest in the Disaster Services area. At the same time we had the creation of our Disaster Service Unit. We had the White House and other agencies begin to look at the Corporation as the expert for nonprofits and making

connections for nonprofits, especially in the Gulf region. The Corporation was asked to take the lead in writing the nonprofit chapter of Secretary of the Navy, Ray Mabus' long-term recovery report for the Gulf coast. Our Office of Research and Policy and our Strategy Office were a huge part of writing this chapter, which was a success.

Writing this chapter helped us expand our presence within the Gulf and the nonprofit world in general. We were not just talking to people within the Gulf region but also to people across the country and other federal agencies in terms of the work of volunteers and the work of nonprofits in the disaster area. From them, we started to have requests from the White House for the Corporation to hold non-profit webinars, of which we have had two so far.

We have gone from being more operational (focusing mainly on the disaster response) to the strategic approach, taking us across the continuum of Disaster Services (preparation, mitigation, response, and recovery). We will continue to build our relationships with the Disaster Service community so when there is another increase in activity we are already part of the community and looked at as leaders. The NCCC will continue to be the Corporation's number one asset in the areas of preparation, mitigation, response, and recovery.

Our strategic approach has mainly been based on partnerships so we have been having a lot of partnership meetings. We are finding that a lot of these agencies and organizations want to pilot with the NCCC and let the NCCC open up the world of other national service participants to their organizations.

We recently updated our MOU with the National VOAD (Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster). We have taken the approach of really updating some of our MOUs to a place where we are defining what it is we can actually do for each other and to be more tangible and supportive of each other's organizations. We are working on updating the MOU with FEMA. We are continuing to bring long-term recovery efforts into the Gulf Coast. We held a very successful convening in Louisiana with 164 individuals from across the nonprofit sector, NGOs, local government, and state government. From the convening, each of the state service commissions has developed coordinating councils within their states.

We have been working with the Clean Economy Development Center, an organization that works to connect resources, to continue to bring in resources to the Gulf Coast so we can assist with that long-term recovery.

### **Status of Federal Partnerships (by Charles Davenport, Director of Projects and Partnerships)**

Mr. Davenport briefly discussed the different sheets in the packet for new partners of the NCCC. He went on to thank the new members for being a part of the board and serving as a partner of the NCCC.

We have partners that we have just begun relationships with and partners that we have had longstanding relationships with. We are moving to a point where you will see our

representatives having relationships with all the federal agencies that are represented on our board.

Mr. Davenport discussed the project development process. We want our partners to know that we do not want this to be a one project situation where we work with your agency for six to eight weeks. We are trying to build longstanding relationships.

We hope to have a report at the June meeting on the status of Federal Partnerships. We are going to be very aggressive working together setting up meetings, coming up with concrete plans of how we want to move forward. You can partner with all areas of NCCC, as you've seen with the service learning aspect and with the recruitment aspect. Our focus now is mainly on the project side of the house, and at the June meeting we hope to roll out the ideas of the projects that we want do for Class 18, which starts in September of 2011. We want to make sure that a certain percentage of our projects come from federal partners.

### **Board Strategy and Bylaws (by Kate Becker, Chair)**

It is key that we continue to have an active board. We are not a financial giving board; we do not require that people donate a certain amount of money. We are looking for people to take action and to participate in the process.

Some of the tweaking that we did on the bylaws were simple things that needed updating because the bylaws have been in existence since the organization started. There was a focus on the number of terms people would serve so that we continue to have good, talented people coming into the organization. The renewal of terms is not just assumed, but will occur assuming that the board member is participating. The new bylaws state that there would be two three-year terms with the possibility of extending one year for a total of a seven-year commitment.

Term limits and expiration dates for all the board members have been established. This has not been written into the bylaws but we have agreed to it. It has been agreed that a board member is not excluded from the benefit of having connection to the NCCC, but they would be recused from any conversations that would directly impact them. We have added to the bylaws that there will always be two members who are on the NCCC board that are newly-graduated alumni and that serve a two-year term. The Board Chair will continue to have a seven-year term, as all other members of the board.

The top three things to focus on with respect to Board Strategy are:

(1) Board governance and membership. It's stated in the bylaws that Mr. Herrington will select board members. We want to ensure that the board is diverse in several different ways including bipartisan, gender, types of position, ethnicity, et cetera. Alumni who are passionate about NCCC should be considered for membership.

(2) Building long-term sustainability and health of the program. All of us have the potential to make sure we are raising visibility with our stakeholders and helping people understand what the NCCC does. Some ways of going about this are: writing op-eds and posting them in newspapers; nominating the NCCC for awards and recognition; meet-and-greets with elected officials.

(3) Understanding goals of growth, number, and impact. We are looking at double enrollment at some of the campuses.

Mr. Herrington lead a discussion on selecting June and December dates for the upcoming board meetings.

**Projects and Partnerships Committee Update (by Rex Linder, Committee Chair)**

Ms. Keel, program associate for the Projects and Partnerships Unit, spoke about the social media work. This year for the first time, we are starting to take a more intentional look at social media through planning years ahead and making goals, as well as branching out from our initial endeavors in Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and teen blogging. We are looking into newer media outlets like Blog Talk Radio, and developing an interactive deployment map so that our alumni, sponsors, and friends can track where our teams are at all times.

Just last year we launched our Facebook fan page and we have over 6,300 fans at this moment. Our fan base is growing and there is a lot of activity. We have thousands of people who are active on the page, not just fans.

We have worked on a new print ad campaign that will direct applicants of our program and recruits to Facebook. Rather than just looking at our website and learning about the program that way they will actually be able to interact with alumni, current members, and other applicants of the program to find out more about it.

We are looking at ways of not only engaging our applicants and current members, but alumni who have moved on from the program and our sponsors who are already in the professional public service world. We are tapping into some professional networks like LinkedIn.

We have updated the sponsor brochure materials to a more formal presentation book style. Our templated Word one-page documents can be edited by the campuses and targeted at specific issue areas or geographic regions, and can be customized to the presentation that we are doing.

Ms. Mathis spoke about the Serve America Act mandate that 50 percent of members be youth of disadvantaged circumstances. We have developed a pipeline with five partners: Casey Family Programs, Covenant House, Job Corps, YouthBuild, and the National Guard Youth Challenge. When this started in 2010 at LaQuine Roberson's Atlantic Region campus eight percent of applicants were from the Youth Challenge pipeline, which was our only partner at the time. Since then, we went into our fall 2010 campuses and went up to 29 percent of applications being from our pipeline members. Now, overall we are at 14 percent, showing a lot of progress.

The challenges have been where we have not been able to retain all of the young people who have actually applied. We are working on better communication and explaining the process to staff people that actually recommend applicants. Right now, about 48 percent of applicants who applied through the pipelines drop off somewhere in the process before they arrive at campus. We are working on making sure the pipeline partners understand

these numbers so that they recommend people who have a better understanding of the time commitment involved, from starting the process, moving to campus, and then completing at the NCCC campus.

Ms. Clay spoke about performance measures and how the federal government has come down with pressure to improve policymaking through more metric measure types of analyses. The OMB has specifically charged the NCCC with obligations. The NCCC has contracted a group called Project Start to help make sure that high-quality measures can be implemented easily, that the information is verified, and that there is good quality data. As part of this project, we have five project-based measures called a Successful Service Intervention that we are going to test pilot in the winter. This is a kind of global measure that lets us know how well an NCCC team is able to satisfy the specific needs of a community or project.

We have a measure around Disaster Services, volunteers, housing, and the environment. We also have three measures around member services activities, which are all based on service leadership curriculum that is implemented with the members. We will be piloting that, although the pilot won't be completed by the time the 2012 fiscal year starts which is when you need to have selected one quality measure.

### **Policy and Operations Committee Update (by Tony Perez, Committee Chair)**

The 2012 budget should include close to \$6 million for the relocation of Perry Point. It is part of our internal request but we have not gotten feedback from OMB so we don't know if it will be in the 2012 President's budget yet.

The intention of the Presidio site is to have a national site that would capture initiatives as it relates to national service, institutes, and training.

For a while there were prospects about the relocation of Sacramento, which is now on hold. The lease will be up for competition in January and the terms of the lease will be based on a year and four option years.

The optimization plan included Vicksburg and Vinton as areas that were going to be intervened. Originally conversations were planned in Vicksburg preceding Vinton, but at this point the order has been reversed and Vinton will undergo the optimization plan during the second half of 2011. The 2012 budget submission includes a proposed optimization of the Vicksburg campus.

Other discussions framing within the optimization claim have been about sites: Tornado Alley, hurricane zones, and fire suppression in the Pacific Northwest inclusive of California. Some of the sites should start specializing not only as it relates to training, but also intervention in those emergency response situations.

In terms of classes, 2008 was the year that the two-year budget preparations submission and acceptance changed into a one-year. The two-year funding would be the best

scenario. The advocacy on the policy side shifts to the business of how to get Congress back in, with OMB's endorsement, to a two-year funding cycle.

Acquisitions, staff time, and funding have all been issues. I am confident that this is the team to deal with these challenges.

**Member Services Update (by Nick Zefran, Director of Member Services, serving as a designee for Committee Chair Janet Wall)**

Application numbers continue to rise. We went from 3,600 roughly in Class 15 to this past Class 17 which is 7,460. In the fall for Class 17 we received 5,000 applications. The Class 17 demographic data for the fall campuses shows 8.27 percent pipeline members. One of the trends we are seeing in our application numbers is a larger number of high school graduates, which is five percent.

So far, for this past class, our numbers are up on African-American members. Traditionally, we had four to five percent every year. For Class 17 it is seven percent. Our Hispanic numbers went down from four/five percent to three percent. Our retention rate as of June 2010 is 94 percent, which is good.

We want to have a discussion after the new year about how we can better track the personal reasons part of why people leave. I am going to engage the region directors and leadership team on this discussion.

In terms of the Disadvantaged Youth data, Class 15 is pre-Serve America Act. I worked with the five counselors to develop a set of criteria of who we think disadvantaged youth are which we have utilized to track our members just for that particular year prior to the Serve America Act coming in. We used the zip code analysis to determine economically disadvantaged members, which was not very successful. We counted the percentage of members who indicated one or more of the disadvantaged criteria. We were at 46 percent disadvantaged youth in Class 15, when the criteria were not economic plus one. When you make it economic plus one, we are down to five percent.

The Serve America Act lists economically disadvantaged plus one of the following criteria: out-of-school youth; previously in foster care; limited English proficiency; homeless or had previously run away from home; left secondary school without a diploma; former juvenile offender; physical or mental learning disability.

For Class 17 in Sacramento, Denver, and Vicksburg we looked at the economic criteria plus one. In the survey that was used to determine these numbers we added criteria called "qualified to receive free or reduced school meals at any time". This statistic is a lot more reliable than zip codes. If you look at just the fall campuses, 17 percent checked the school meals criteria.

For the fall campuses, using only zip codes as the economic indicator, we are at five percent. Adding the school lunch program takes us up to eight percent. This is not a significant increase in numbers, but we have not done the winter campuses yet. When

winter comes, we are hoping to be closer to ten percent overall for this year as opposed to three percent using the old criteria in previous years.

Member Services is not just selection and placement. A big part of the effort is in the area of member development and training. We are currently revising how we approach training by redesigning, retooling, and reintegrating training throughout the whole ten-month year so that it is a development process. We have entitled the new approach “Service Leadership Programming” and it has four new outcomes: be a master of change; build and sustain effective teams; demonstrate character and responsibility; and commit to life and career skills development. Our performance measures are very much tied to these four outcomes in the new Service Leadership Program.

We are putting together a matrix of the four outcomes followed by the competencies and then the learning objectives and training activities that fall under each. We are going to fine-tune it and present to the board for review and comment, and we are hoping to have it in its final stages for piloting in January/February of this coming year.

In terms of member development opportunities, we have worked very hard to provide opportunities for people to develop while they serve within the program. We added a new course this year and we offer three courses for undergraduate credit. The new course that is being offered for credit is “Diversity in Service”. Our first graduates from that were from the fall campuses in July and then most recently from the winter campuses in November. A team leader can now get nine undergraduate credits; a corps member can get six undergraduate credits just by serving and completing the requirements in the 10-month program.

We still offer the Certificate of Nonprofit Management through Louisiana State University and the University of Montana. We offer the Presidential and Congressional rewards for service. We 100 percent certify all members and team leaders in CPR, First Aid, and Disaster Services through the Red Cross. We have a minimum of 20 members at each campus certified in firefighting. We are working on getting credible service hours for members who do over 80 hours on Department of Interior related projects so that if they want to work with the DoI after NCCC those hours will count as credible service hours towards their application.

**Break and Preparation for Public Meeting (1:41 p.m.)**