

Programs and Partnerships
Niswonger Foundation Board Update
Thursday, November 12, 2020

Staff Highlights

- Scott Niswonger was inducted into the Hall of Fame by the Tennessee Independent Colleges and Universities Association (TICUA).
- Denise Arnold has been selected for the 2020-21 National College Attainment Network Advocacy Fellowship. Niswonger Scholars Jasmine Martin and Gustavo Castillo were selected to join her as Student Advocacy Fellows. Our team will join others across the country strategically advocating for policies that promote postsecondary access and success at the federal level.
- Nancy Dishner was appointed to a five-year term on the Tennessee Arts Commission.
- The Niswonger Foundation hosted Commissioner Penny Schwinn for a regional visit on October 27-28.

Program Updates

Rural LIFE (2017 EIR)

- Because of the COVID-related uncertainty of schools' schedules and the decision to add an extra "no-cost" year to our federal project, we had classified the current school year as an "extended transition" year. This meant that the second group of schools *could* have a longer time to "onboard" the RL project. Although we did miss some valuable training time in the summer, we have been pleased that most schools have chosen to begin activities now; only a few are waiting until next spring or summer. 25 of the 31 eligible schools have started implementing their RL school plans, with coaching support and/or grant-funded resources.
- All TN school districts selected a new English/Language Arts (ELA) curriculum last Spring, with the plan of incorporating the new materials starting this Fall. To help our local schools (and districts) in their first-year implementation plan,
- Rural LIFE is partnering with TNTP to provide a "Strong Start" program for interested teachers and administrators; the Strong Start program will provide an *extra* level of support for participants. TNTP is a nationally respected technical-assistance partner; the TN Department of Education has contracted with TNTP to help with training across the state.
- Our RL coaches are working collaboratively with project schools to provide support as appropriate. Some schools welcome in-school coaching; others are relying on "virtual" support only. We are learning new ways to support, including assistance for teaching students in a "virtual" classroom.

Developing Academic Coaches (2019 EIR) project

- Work continues with the 30 treatment schools within twelve districts.

- Monthly online forums are conducted with formal instruction on skills required to be academic coaches. These are all done virtually. It also gives all the teachers an opportunity to network with others in our region concerning online and in person instruction.
- Our two lead coaches provide in-field coaching to the 60+ teachers who are being trained in the field of academic coaching of their peers. Each teacher has designated times to work with a peer or peer group to improve their skills at leading instructional improvements.
- As part of the research portion of this grant, teacher surveys will be utilized. We are currently working with Directors of Schools and Principals on securing email information from all teachers in the schools as well as other demographic information.
- As schools transition back and forth from in-person, remote virtual, and A/B schedule platforms, our staff makes modifications in how we go about delivering our supports to maintain the goals of the grant.

Niswonger Online

- Fall semester began with a rolling start in August due to COVID. The semester will end on December 16. Leniency will be given to students who need to extend the completion of their coursework into the spring term.
- Fall enrollment is 798. This is larger than normal due to student needs of remote classes
- Florida Virtual (FLVS) Perpetual Contract ending
 - FLVS is ending all perpetual contracts with partners. This means that using their online courses with our teachers and having them updated by FLVS each year will end in May 2021.
 - We have decided to take the FLVS courses that we have and use them as a model to create our own online courses, therefore, ending our reliance on a 3rd party.
 - We currently have multiple teachers developing these new courses. They will be ready by May 2021.
- Sevier County has enrolled their first students. We anticipate a bigger enrollment next semester as they will also be offering our new CTE courses to their students.
- NiswongerOnline.com is continuously being updated with semester dates and information, our course catalog, and program partnerships.
- Affiliate school systems are still showing strong enrollment, even as most of them are now fully paying with all CARE Foundation funds being allocated. All CARE Foundation grant funds will be expended by Fall 2021.
- This fall we offered two new courses, American Sign Language and Fundamentals of Education. We welcome two new teachers, Erica Phillips (ASL, Washington Co Schools, VA Deaf and Hard of Hearing teacher) and Kimber McIntyre (Fundamentals of Ed, Greeneville High School). Both courses have strong enrollments.
- We negotiated with Canvas to have access to a new program called Canvas Studio. This is a program that allows for teachers and students to easily create

videos. Teachers can add questions to the videos for reviews and checkpoints. The teachers are excited to have this feature, and many have already started to use it.

- **TN Community CARES Grant**
 - Opportunity to offer up to 500 scholarships for online seats focused on AP and CTE.
 - Ability to increase our course catalog by over 20 courses with course development funds including four CTE Programs of Study; Coding, Networking, Teaching as Profession, and Health Sciences. Fourteen online teachers are currently working on these new courses.
 - Niswonger Online will now offer 63 fully online courses to our students.
- **Course Modifications**
 - Due to most face-to-face classroom students not being able to move forward after March 20th, we have modified Spanish II, French II, Latin II, Spanish III, Latin III, Accounting II, and Geometry to teach content that was not covered in Spring 2020. These modifications will extend into the spring semester, 2021, to make sure all students who might have fallen behind will have a chance to catch up.

NiswongerCARE College and Career Advising

- “Delivery of Service” meetings were held in all 30 high schools to guide the work of the advisors for the 2020-2021 school year. Based on the preference of the school administration, meetings were held in-person or through video conferencing with collaboration among NiswongerCARE Advisor and Supervisor, School Counselor, and Principal.
- COVID-19 protocols were established for all NiswongerCARE staff in collaboration with each district’s plan.
- Advisors reported to their assigned schools during August in keeping with each school’s specific reopening procedures.
- Ongoing supervision and observation meetings are being held in-person and through video conferencing by the program directors assigned to each advisor.
- Signal Vine messaging platform for communicating with students was fully implemented on October 27th providing a robust tool that will allow programming to continue seamlessly, regardless of a district’s opening status; whether learning is fully remote, students are on hybrid schedules, or all learning is fully in-person. Students currently active on the platform total **1,095** with new contacts being added daily. This was purchased with funding by a CARES Community Non-profit grant.
- Advisors now have access to the Calendly scheduling application that allows students and parents to schedule both in-person and virtual meetings at their convenience.
- Strategic plans were developed and implemented for leveraging social media in order to more effectively engage students, families, and stakeholders.

- NiswongerCARE website was updated to more specifically target students and families as the primary audience.
- NiswongerCARE YouTube channel was created to provide students with access to numerous informational and how-to videos uploaded by Advisors. Current statistics show over **1,400** views.
- *Completion of Campaign 1: College Application/TN Promise (August- October).* College Application Week events were held September 21-25 in all **30** high schools.
 - With many schools on remote and hybrid schedules, a virtual event was organized to serve students who were not accessible in the school building. Advisors contacted regional, state, public, private, and technical post-secondary institutes asking that they provide informational videos with step-by step directions for completing admissions applications. Advisors also created a kick-off video with a personalized message for students in each school.
 - Videos were uploaded to YouTube and seniors were emailed a different playlist each day along with a link to the Advisor's Calendly scheduling app to request assistance. This event reached over 6,000 seniors each day, resulting in **30,000** total emails being sent for the week.
 - In addition, several in-person events were held with another **404** seniors submitting applications.
- TN Promise application opened on August 1st with a December 1st extended deadline for seniors to apply.
 - Social media campaigns were initiated, as well as text nudges and emails to students advising them of the opportunity and deadline for Tennessee Promise.
 - In -person assistance was provided during school to small groups and individuals when permitted.
 - Contacting students learning remotely provided extra challenges. Advisors added additional supports for those students such as Zoom meetings and phone calls.
 - YouTube was utilized to provide another layer of assistance. Advisor Drew Gray, "The College-ologist" created a step by step instruction video for filling out the Tennessee Promise application that has been viewed **1,046** times since it was uploaded.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ip6gf-TzPfQ>
 - Ongoing collaboration with the Tennessee Student Assistance Outreach specialist allowed access to student lists for on-going targeting and monitoring.
 - Data through October 28th show that **4963 (80%)** seniors have submitted a Tennessee Promise application with another month remaining before the deadline.

CareerConnect

- CareerConnect welcomed nearly 100 new students into the Class of 2023.
- Due to schools being either completely online, on a hybrid schedule, or students electing to attend school virtually this semester, the majority of CareerConnect monthly meetings have been held online via Zoom. In October, tenth and eleventh grade students at North Greene High School were able to attend their first in-person meeting. Despite the program mostly being online, our overall student engagement has been positive, especially with the sophomore cohort.
- The Explorers in the Class of 2021 are currently developing their post-secondary plans. COVID changing the way some services are delivered (FAFSA workshops, TN Promise meetings, etc.) has presented an opportunity for the CareerConnect staff to meet with seniors on a one-on-one basis and aid on an individual level. With our one-on-one meetings, the CareerConnect staff has been able to dedicate more time and attention to our seniors to fully develop post-secondary plans, whether that be attending a TCAT, community college, four-year university, joining the military or entering the workforce. The majority of CareerConnect seniors are on a college-bound pathway and are choosing to attend local post-secondary institutions.
- Later in the fall semester, CareerConnect staff will begin to explore the possibility of holding a 2021 Summer Experience. We will plan for June and July 2021 with the hope that there will no longer be any COVID restrictions. We will also explore other alternatives to be able to provide an immersive college and career exploration experience for our students over the summer.

WE Track (Work Ethic Diploma Tracking System)

- Three school systems have been added to the WE Track program – Rutherford, Henderson and Lawrence Counties.
- Work continues with the onboarding for Southeastern Tennessee.
- Development of Virginia site is now underway with a beta launch target of November 17.
- Currently working to update employer pages to include previous years geographic growth and new industry profiles
- Efforts continue to engage with various state agencies to ensure the future of WE Track..

Comprehensive Educational Resources (CER)

- There are currently 29 teams of the region's best teachers creating exemplary classroom materials to meet Tennessee Standards and provide for quality classroom instruction.
- Approximately 60 standards were added to the website in October.
- Etowah City Schools joined this project. Currently there are 20 school systems collaborating with this work.

- Dr. Moorhouse and Mia Hyde presented to 4 regional Superintendent Study Councils in October.

Grant and Partnership Update

- REL Appalachia Partnership – REL App is providing the development costs and personnel to develop and present a train-the-trainer program to improve remote learning. The goal of this training will be to develop capacity in educators to be able to create and deliver quality online and hybrid instruction to our students. This is a year-long effort for 2020-21.
- CARES Funding
 - Payroll Production Program \$200,529
 - Community CARES grant to Non-Profits - \$145,500
 - Sub-grant through the TN Department of Education - \$700,000
- We are awaiting news regarding the 2020 Mid-phase (\$8 million) Education, Innovation and Research (EIR) grant submitted to the U.S. Department of Education. This grant is designed to 1) focus on strengthening the teaching/learning classroom experiences with engaging materials for students and professional development for teachers; 2) experiential out-of-school time opportunities to explore STEM content; 3) expanding participation in rigorous STEM and dual enrollment courses.
- National Security Administration grant was received by the University of Alabama-Huntsville. This proposal includes the development and implementation of an online cybersecurity high school course(s) targeting rural and home school students. Our Consortium will be one of the implementation site partners.

Contributions (August to October)

Scott Niswonger	\$ 483,000.00
Doug Carmichael	16,000.00
Henry and Dr. Flora Joy	500.00
Ricky and Robin Shepherd	250.00
Corporate Giving	39.77
Total	\$ 499,789.77

Niswonger Foundation Board Representation

- Statewide Boards
 - Tennessee Higher Education Commission
 - Tennessee Independent Colleges and Universities
 - Communities in Schools
 - Tennesseans for Quality Early Education
 - Governor’s Early Literacy Foundation
 - State Collaborative on Reforming Education

- Tennessee Arts Commission
 - Tennessee Department of Education Partners Council
- Regional Boards
 - Tusculum University Board of Trustees

LEVELING THE PLAYING FIELD WITH 63 FULLY ONLINE ASYNCHRONOUS COURSES

<u>ELA</u>	<u>Science</u>	<u>CTE & Electives</u>	<u>Math</u>
English III	Chemistry	Accounting 1 & 2	Algebra I
English IV	Physics	Am Business and Legal	Algebra II
AP Literature	AP Env Science	Child and Life Development	Geometry
AP Language	<u>Foreign Language</u>	Preparing for ACT	AP Statistics
<u>Social Studies</u>	Spanish 1-3	Intro to Cosmetology	
World History and Geog	French 1-2	Microsoft Productivity	
US History and Geog	Latin 1-3	Web Design I	
US Government	Am Sign Language 1-3	AP Comp Sience A	
Personal Finance	<u>Fine Arts</u>	<u>CTE Programs of Study (Levels 1-3)</u>	
Economics	General Music	<u>Coding</u>	<u>Health Sciences</u>
Contemporary Issues	AP Art History	Comp Sci Fdns	Health Sci Ed
Sociology	Art 1 - Appreciation	Coding I	Med Therapeutics
Psychology	Art 2 - Criticism	Coding II	Med Terminology
AP Human Geography	Art 3 - Careers in Art	<u>Networking</u>	Anatomy and Phys
AP Psychology	Art 3 - Photography	Comp Sci Fnds	<u>Teaching as a Profession</u>
<u>PE/Wellness</u>		Comp Systems	Fundamentals of Ed
Physical Education 1		Networking	Teaching as a Prof 1
Lifetime Wellness			Teaching as a Prof 2

