

## ***Statewide Advisory Board Provides Important Leadership for the FloridaLearns STEM Scholars Project***

### Participating School Districts



#### **Panhandle Area Educational Consortium**

Patrick L. McDaniel, Executive Director

Calhoun  
Franklin  
Gadsden  
Gulf  
Holmes  
Jackson  
Jefferson  
Liberty  
Madison  
Taylor  
Wakulla  
Walton  
Washington



#### **Heartland Educational Consortium**

Tom Conner, Executive Director

DeSoto  
Glades  
Hardee  
Hendry  
Highlands  
Okeechobee



#### **North East Florida Educational Consortium**

James Surrency, Ph.D., Executive Director

Columbia  
Flagler  
Gilchrist  
Lafayette  
Levy  
P.K. Yonge  
Putnam  
Union

The *FloridaLearns STEM Scholars* Statewide Advisory Board met in Tallahassee at the Tallahassee Community College Capitol Center on Tuesday, May 14, 2013, for updates, progress reports, and discussion about options for the sustainability of project activities after project funding ends in the summer of 2014. This dedicated group of professional leaders from Florida's business, agency, and educational communities willingly serve in an advisory capacity and provide valuable input and thoughtful guidance for the *FloridaLearns STEM Scholars* Project. Members of the Advisory Board who could not attend in person were able to participate via Interactive videoconferencing.

The *FloridaLearns STEM Scholars* Project is funded through the Florida Department of Education's Race to the Top award and involves a partnership among Florida's three educational consortia, which provide critical educational support services to Florida's small and rural school districts. The consortia are Panhandle Area Educational Consortium in northwest Florida, Heartland Educational Consortium in south central Florida, and North East Florida Educational Consortium in the north-east part of the state. The project is focused on serving gifted and talented students in grades 9 – 12 who reside in the small and rural school districts served by PAEC, HEC, and NEFEC. It affords increased access to rigorous STEM courses, provides collaborative problem-solving experiences, and ensures that students are well informed about STEM career options.

A critical component for the success of this Project is the involvement of professional leaders in the fields of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) as members of the Statewide Advisory Board. Members of the Board are representative of Florida's STEM stakeholders from business, industry, educational institutions, government agencies, economic development, chambers of commerce, trade associations, foundations, workforce development, and other STEM related groups. They contribute important insights, and provide leadership in helping Florida's most capable students become aware of STEM educational and workplace opportunities. As successful leaders in STEM fields themselves, they bring important perspectives to the *FloridaLearns STEM Scholars* Project.

Advisory Board member Winston E. Scott, former astronaut and current Senior Vice President for External Relations & Economic Development at the Florida Institute of Technology, talked about the importance of STEM education. Dr. Scott commented, "I'd like to encourage everybody to encourage their students to participate in STEM. Everything we do in this great country of ours is based on our knowledge of science,

## Participating School Districts



### Panhandle Area Educational Consortium

Patrick L. McDaniel, Executive Director

Calhoun  
Franklin  
Gadsden  
Gulf  
Holmes  
Jackson  
Jefferson  
Liberty  
Madison  
Taylor  
Wakulla  
Walton  
Washington



### Heartland Educational Consortium

Tom Conner, Executive Director

DeSoto  
Glades  
Hardee  
Hendry  
Highlands  
Okeechobee



### North East Florida Educational Consortium

James Surrency, Ph.D., Executive Director

Columbia  
Flagler  
Gilchrist  
Lafayette  
Levy  
P.K. Yonge  
Putnam  
Union

technology, engineering and math. We're a leader in the world because of our science and technology. If we're going to maintain that world leadership, we have to encourage more and more students to get involved with STEM courses, and ultimately careers in STEM. STEM is not only important, but STEM is very exciting, and we must get as many students involved as possible. They're headed for a life full of adventure and exciting things they could never even dream of."

Paul Dyal, Superintendent of Taylor County Schools and member of the Statewide Advisory Board, spoke about the value of the *FloridaLearns STEM Scholars* Project to smaller school districts. Superintendent Dyal stated, "It has been a godsend for us. Being a small and rural school district, there are a lot of opportunities for some of our more talented students to participate in that we just can't afford as a district. The STEM Project through PAEC has been a godsend because it has allowed these students to experience many more high-level activities in the sciences and technology, engineering and math, and that's really enabled us to show our upper level kids that it's okay. It's okay for you to be able to be able to participate in these. It's okay for you to be very, very successful. So we appreciate it so much."



Superintendent Paul Dyal from Taylor County Schools, Susan Emrich, Chief Operating Officer for the David H. Melvin, Inc. consulting engineering firm, and Greg Ira, Director of Environmental Education for the Florida Department of Environmental Protection arrive at the TCC Capitol Center in Tallahassee for the May 2013 meeting of the *FloridaLearns STEM Scholars* Statewide Advisory Board.

Statewide Advisory Board member Greg Ira is the Director of the Office of Environmental Education for the Florida Department of Environmental Protection. He sees significant benefits in connecting school districts with the informal education community. He commented, "The *FloridaLearns STEM Scholars* project is developing and refining the kind of practices that every school district will need as they move toward building systematic and effective STEM educational programs.

## Participating School Districts



### Panhandle Area Educational Consortium

Patrick L. McDaniel, Executive Director

Calhoun  
Franklin  
Gadsden  
Gulf  
Holmes  
Jackson  
Jefferson  
Liberty  
Madison  
Taylor  
Wakulla  
Walton  
Washington



### Heartland Educational Consortium

Tom Conner, Executive Director

DeSoto  
Glades  
Hardee  
Hendry  
Highlands  
Okeechobee



### North East Florida Educational Consortium

James Surrency, Ph.D., Executive Director

Columbia  
Flagler  
Gilchrist  
Lafayette  
Levy  
P.K. Yonge  
Putnam  
Union

Foremost among these is the need for systematic coordination between school districts and the informal education community, including business, government and non-profits, that can provide technical support, financial resources, and real world experiences for student and teacher learning. For small, rural districts in particular, the ability to harness these informal education resources may mean the difference between students who simply graduate with STEM skills and those who can succeed in higher education and compete in the global marketplace for STEM careers.”



Dr. Winston Scott, Senior Vice President for External Relations & Economic Development at the Florida Institute of Technology, Dr. James Brooks newly appointed Physics Department Chair at Florida State University, and Dr. Mabry Gaboardi from Tallahassee Community College discuss sustainability strategies for the *FloridaLearns STEM Scholars* Project.

Susan Emrich, Statewide Advisory Board member and Chief Operating Officer for David H. Melvin, Inc. Consulting Engineers, discussed their participation in the *FloridaLearns STEM Scholars* Project. She stated, “As a corporate partner, Melvin Engineering can attest to the benefits of participating in the STEM Scholars project. While being located in rural Florida along the I-10 corridor certainly has its advantages, it also has challenges particularly as relates recruiting and retaining qualified professionals in the field of engineering. As a full service civil engineering firm, our goal is to hire qualified professionals who possess the requisite academic, problem-solving, and leadership skills necessary to positively impact our rural communities. The STEM Scholars project not only gives students the opportunity to explore the broad field of engineering but also gives us the opportunity to introduce them to a specific discipline of which they may not be aware.

## Participating School Districts



### Panhandle Area Educational Consortium

Patrick L. McDaniel, Executive Director

Calhoun  
Franklin  
Gadsden  
Gulf  
Holmes  
Jackson  
Jefferson  
Liberty  
Madison  
Taylor  
Wakulla  
Walton  
Washington



### Heartland Educational Consortium

Tom Conner, Executive Director

DeSoto  
Glades  
Hardee  
Hendry  
Highlands  
Okeechobee



### North East Florida Educational Consortium

James Surrency, Ph.D., Executive Director

Columbia  
Flagler  
Gilchrist  
Lafayette  
Levy  
P.K. Yonge  
Putnam  
Union

Melvin Engineering has come to understand the importance of providing an environment where young professionals can apply their knowledge and skills, are encouraged to creatively solve problems, and given opportunities to develop their leadership skills. We also recognize that talented and gifted students are an invaluable asset and so we are committed to providing as much help and support as possible to STEM scholars. Why? Because we want these students to return home once they earn their engineering degree--to work in a profession that will allow them to raise their families, contribute to the community, and help sustain and improve the quality of life found in North Florida.”

An integral part of Florida’s economic future depends upon the presence of a highly skilled and educated STEM-proficient workforce. Through the *FloridaLearns STEM Scholars* Project, and with the support of the highly successful STEM leaders who serve on the Statewide Advisory Board, increasing numbers of gifted and talented students in small and rural districts across the state are being prepared to meet this critical need.



Dr. Laura Lang, Director, Learning Systems Institute at FSU, Susan Emrich, Chief Operating Officer for David H. Melvin, Inc. Consulting Engineers, Dr. Sarah Clemmons, Senior Vice President for Instruction at Chipola College, and Greg Ira, Director of Environmental Education for the Florida Department of Environmental Protection discuss key issues and ideas related to continued STEM talent development for students.