

State Apprenticeship Advisory Council (SAAC) Meeting Minutes

December 19, 2024, 10:30 a.m. (Eastern Standard Time)

Virtual Meeting

The meeting was called to order by chairperson Kevin O'Farrell, Chancellor, Division of Career and Adult Education, Florida Department of Education (FDOE). The council members and attendees were welcomed, the Pledge of Allegiance was recited, and roll call was taken. SAAC Members present at the meeting were: Kirk Barras, David McCraw, Lee Middleton, Karen Nichols, Steve Cona III, Robert Tidwell and the Honorable Kathryn Starkey. Ex-officio members present were Kathryn Wheeler and Chancellor Kevin O'Farrell. A quorum was present.

Chancellor O'Farrell gave the opening remarks to the SAAC, and highlighted some achievements included in the 2023-2024 Annual Apprenticeship and Preapprenticeship Report:

- Fourteen percent increase in the number of active number of apprentices and preapprentices, totaling just over 22,400 participants,
- Nine percent increase in the number of active programs,
- Thirty-two new apprenticeship programs, for a total of 329 active programs,
- Eleven new preapprenticeship programs for a total of sixty-eight active preapprenticeship programs, and
- Over 1,100 participating employers in registered apprenticeship.

Chancellor O'Farrell commended Governor DeSantis for his leadership, during which the following accomplishments have been achieved:

- Sixty percent increase in registered apprentices,
- Forty-four percent increase in registered apprenticeship programs,
- Fifty-three percent increase in registered programs (both apprenticeship and preapprenticeship), and
- 120 percent increase in apprenticeable occupations.

Chancellor O'Farrell introduced Director Wheeler.

Kathryn Wheeler, Director of Apprenticeship, gave the Director's Report on preapprenticeship. The Florida Department of Education is considering changes to the Preapprenticeship Rule and is seeking information and comments from the State Apprenticeship Advisory Council.

Per Rule 6A-23.010(1), F.A.C.:

The primary objective of the preapprenticeship program is to provide Florida residents with educational and training opportunities to enable them, upon completion of preapprenticeship training, to obtain entrance into a registered apprenticeship program, based upon the selection criteria established by a registered apprenticeship program sponsor.

During the 2023-2024 program year, there were 68 registered preapprenticeship programs. Of those, only 36 programs reported enrollment to the state.

There are many opportunities to strengthen preapprenticeship, including the following:

- Currently there is no registration system through which preapprenticeship programs and participants can be tracked.
- Seek ways to easily facilitate reporting requirements.
- Move toward standardized hours spent on related technical instruction and on-the-job training (OJT) (if applicable) as there is in registered apprenticeship.
- Measure the rate of articulation into registered apprenticeship.
- Increase the effectiveness of the deregistration process.
- Strengthen the connection between the registered preapprenticeship program and the registered apprenticeship program.
 - Better align geographic location requirements of the registered preapprenticeship program and partnering registered apprenticeship program.
 - Ensure that registered preapprenticeship programs are properly aligned with a registered apprenticeship program.
 - Ensure that the sponsoring registered apprenticeship program can effectively serve the capacity of the registered preapprenticeship program.

Director Wheeler presented the following items for consideration:

1. Reinforce the partnering registered apprenticeship sponsor as a key partner in the preapprenticeship program.
 - Require the partnering registered apprenticeship sponsor to be a member of the preapprenticeship program committee.
 - Require a memorandum of understanding between the partnering registered apprenticeship sponsor and the preapprenticeship program.
 - Require the registered apprenticeship program to be actively training apprentices in the sponsored occupation for at least 12 months within the past calendar year to be eligible to become a partnering registered apprenticeship sponsor.
2. Express program duration in hours. The current program duration is six (6) to twenty-four (24) consecutive months. Without knowing the number of hours of related technical instruction and OJT (if applicable), it is difficult to determine how much credit should be awarded upon entry to the registered apprenticeship program. Consider the following:
 - A minimum of 75 hours of related technical instruction is required for every six (6) months of training, not to exceed twenty-four (24) consecutive months.
3. Simplify the process for the Department to deregister inactive preapprenticeship programs and occupations.
 - The Department may deregister any program or occupation when the preapprenticeship program is not conducted, operated or administered in accordance with the registered standards or the requirements of Chapter 6A-23, F.A.C.

Chancellor O'Farrell welcomed comments from the council members. The following members provided comments:

- Robert Tidwell commented that any preapprenticeship should be in the same geographic area, no more than one county over and include some aspect of OJT.
- Steve Cona asked if there was a way to get a list of preapprenticeship programs his apprenticeship program was currently sponsoring. (Director Wheeler responded that she would send a list.)
- Commissioner Starkey commented on the need to improve tracking to pull reports.

Chancellor O'Farrell opened the floor for public comment. The following attendees provided public comment:

- Jason Lietz, Academy of Construction Technologies, recommended taking into consideration the fact that preapprenticeship opportunities are sometimes offered in non-affluent areas and are supported by registered apprenticeships programs in geographically distant areas, to which participants may relocate upon entry into the registered apprenticeship program. He also commented that he appreciates the challenge that tracking presents, as he is familiar with this challenge.
- Lynette Barcewicz, Florida Trade Academy, commented in favor of moving from a 6-month requirement to an hourly requirement for preapprenticeship. She stated that she was supportive of hands-on training, but not in favor of required OJT.
 - Director Wheeler clarified that the Department was not looking to mandate OJT for preapprenticeship programs, but rather OJT hours would need to be specified, if included.
- Alberto Altamiranda, Director of Education, ABC Institute, Florida East Coast Chapter, asked about directions for registering preapprentices and the funding of preapprenticeship programs. (Chancellor O'Farrell responded that Director Wheeler would reach out to discuss separately.)

Chancellor O'Farrell welcomed closing comments from SAAC members. The following members commented:

- Steve Cona III commented that he loves the structure of apprenticeship and the idea of tracking.
- Robert Tidwell expressed interest in being more involved through the SAAC with changes going on in the Office of Apprenticeship.
- Commissioner Starkey commented on the national proposed rulemaking that had been withdrawn by the US Department of Labor. She also shared the news of Pasco County's memorandum of understanding with the University of Florida Semi-Conductor Institute to expand the AmSkills Preapprenticeship Program across the state.

Chancellor O'Farrell thanked the council members, members of the public, Director Wheeler and the Apprenticeship Team.

Chancellor O'Farrell adjourned the meeting.