



APPROVED Minutes  
Education Committee Meeting  
Forum  
2500 West Broad Street

April 18, 2024  
1:30 p.m.

**Present:** Cristina Ramirez, Patricia Nicoson, Dr. Rodney Berry, David Mills, Karey Malysko, Dr. Irma Becerra, Ms. Fran Bradford

**Staff Present:** Timshel Purdum, Rich Conti, Ada Sue Siler, Ash Harris, Jared Strawderman, Courtney Moyer

**Other Attendees:** Deborah Love, Office of the Attorney General  
Cindy Norwood-Marquez, Committee Member at Large

Dr. Berry called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m.

**Welcome and Approval of Minutes**

Dr. Berry welcomed everyone and asked for everyone present to review the meeting minutes from the January 18, 2024, Education Committee Meeting. Dr. Berry asked for a motion to approve the minutes. The motion was called by Dr. Becerra and seconded by Ms. Ramirez. A vote was taken by verbal affirmation which passed unanimously without objection.

**Education Team and Inspiration Index**

Ms. Purdum shared an overview of the last three months from Team Education.

- Summer Camp 2024 is scheduled to commence on June 17, spanning eight full weeks and one partial week, with an expected total of 540 camper weeks.
- The camp will feature various themes, including Animal Adventures, Space Survival, Mess Fest, Maker Magic, and STEM Surprise.
- Currently, there are 71 camper scholarships utilized.

- From January to March, the museum experienced a busy period with several notable events, including the return of the 21+ events, Science On Tap, which were well-received by attendees.
- The next 21+ event is scheduled for August 1st.
- The introduction of a new math exhibit on Level 3 was highlighted for its impressive design.
- The new format for GLOW! the event, with a full day on Saturday, attracted over 3000 attendees, although spread out over time.
- Various programs were also mentioned, such as Science within Reach and senior morning programming.
- The Library Pass Program was discussed, with passes available at several public libraries for twice-yearly checkouts per family.
- The Science museum has also been actively involved in LEGO programming, with two staff members attending a conference and training session in Boston, and Laura Kramer assisting in the development of a manual for LEGO playful activities.

During a discussion, Ms. Nicoson inquired about the concept of "steampunk," which Ms. Purdum said is a retro Victorian techno experience with elements of science fiction and elaborate costumes.

Dr. Becerra asked about the library passes, which were explained by Ms. Purdum as a membership that allows for checkout and use. Additionally, it was clarified that the passes only cover general admission, not special events or Dome access.

### **Interpretive Plan**

Ms. Purdum gave an overview of the draft Interpretive Plan:

- A strategic objective for the year was the creation of an interpretive plan aimed at communicating the content stories related to STEM that the museum aims to convey.
- The approach to achieve this goal involved Mr. Conti and Ms. Purdum, who, under Mr. Conti's direction, facilitated focus groups and gathered data from both community members and staff focus groups.
- Some of the identified objectives included evolving from the Science Museum's 2021-2026 strategic plan and recognizing the necessity of an interpretive plan to bridge the gap between advanced STEM topics (content priorities) and the public's interests.
- Goals include:

- Identify and focus on cutting-edge STEM content priorities that are relevant to our guests and diverse audiences.
- Address internal scientific expertise, identify where we need support and develop relationships to fill gaps in our knowledge around the content priorities.
- Utilize diverse platforms and programs to communicate content priorities.
- Intentionally lean into breaking STEM discoveries, leveraging platforms such as SOS and Instagram
- Ensure access to content is accessible and inclusive.
- Revisit plan annually to ensure content priorities remain relevant.
- The Science Museum of Virginia stands out as a reliable source amidst the overwhelming amount of content and information available worldwide.
- It is dedicated to examining, assessing, and effectively communicating significant STEM research in an engaging and compelling manner.
- The Science Museum aims to ignite curiosity, encourage further exploration, and assist Virginians in making well-informed decisions regarding their well-being, ultimately striving for growth and success.
- The concept of thriving encompasses longevity and the pursuit of a high quality of life, emphasizing the importance of STEM's intersectionality with culture and empowering individuals to enrich their lives through science.
- Key areas of focus include food, healthcare, technology, social connections, and sustainability.
- These specific areas are prioritized to make them personally relevant for individuals, enabling them to prosper in their lives, enhance their well-being, and contribute to a brighter future.

During the discussion, Dr. Becerra raised concerns about the sustainability issue, emphasizing the impact of human activity on the environment, particularly regarding increased salinity in the Potomac River. Ms. Purdum suggested that the Science Museum could enhance focus and understanding on this topic through workshops.

Dr. Berry inquired about the connection between food and health, prompting discussion on the interrelatedness of these areas and their cultural significance. The conversation shifted to interpretive formats, with an emphasis on leveraging exhibitions, programs, and media to address identified areas of focus.

Mr. Mills sought clarification on areas within the "thrive" categories where education may need bolstering, with Ms. Purdum highlighting the importance of educating staff on topics such as GMOs and AI.

Dr. Becerra and Mr. Conti further discussed the museum's approach to adapting to different audiences and addressing public confusion on science topics.

Finally, Mr. Mills requested to share interpretive plan slides for further review.

### **Volunteer Program and Internships**

Mr. Strawderman shared the following details about the developments in the volunteer program.

- During January to March, the Science Museum of Virginia recorded statistics regarding its volunteer and internship programs.
- These statistics include having 77 regular volunteers and 53 volunteers from various groups such as Genworth, Bank of America, Haleon, YMCA Leaders Club, VSU Chemistry Club, VCU Heart to Soul in Action, and Maggie Walker Governor's School.
- The volunteers collectively contributed 2,200 hours of their time, equivalent to a value of \$70,000 based on an hourly rate of \$31.80 as per data from independentsector.org.
- Additionally, the Science Museum received 207 applicants for its six internship positions and conducted interviews with 35 candidates.
- The internship positions included roles such as Body Worlds Exhibition Interns, Communications Intern, Math Communications Intern, Museum Community & Accessibility Outreach Intern, and Technical Solutions Intern.
- Moreover, the Science Museum is also hosting three high school interns through partnerships with Partnership for the Future and Girls for a Change.
- The Science Museum of Virginia observed a decrease in the number of volunteers, but an increase in the total hours contributed by them.
- Many of the daytime volunteers are retirees.
- An anecdote was shared about a volunteer with military experience in building cloud chambers, who made valuable contributions to enhancing the museum's cloud chamber exhibit.
- The Science Museum often hosts volunteer groups, including several during the Green phase I.
- March was primarily focused on internships, with a significant level of interest and applications received.

- The Science Museum of Virginia is recognizing the differing needs and patterns between youth and adults.
- Efforts are underway to develop processes that better cater to the distinct requirements of each age group.
- For the youth experience, there is a focus on creating more structure, emphasizing skill-building, and providing a broader range of activities.
- Implementing an end date for youth programs is being considered to improve organization.
- Steps are being taken to reduce lag time in the application and initial response process.
- A new initiative involves daily field trips for volunteers and staff to gain knowledge about different areas of the museum, facilitating discussions on interpretation and enhancing the guest experience.
- The museum is also enhancing community engagement through the CFengage Platform for project planning for special events.
- Additionally, collaborative efforts with corporate groups, such as the Community Foundation and CarMax Cares event, are providing funding opportunities for community engagement initiatives.

### **Workforce Survey**

Ms. Purdum discussed the American Alliance of Museums' 2024 workforce demographic survey during the meeting.

- The Science Museum, which was accredited by the American Alliance of Museums a few years ago, will share the survey link with the trustees.
- The survey is intended for staff, trustees, and volunteers to participate in.
- It is essential to reach a certain number of responses to gain access to the museum's specific results, although general results will be provided to all museums regardless.

### **New Business**

Dr. Berry asked for any new business.

Ms. Nicson asked about the hiring status of a new collections manager. Mr. Conti stated that human resources will be recruiting for the vacancy in the Fall.

Ms. Norwood-Marquez offered words of affirmation on the work of the Science Museum and presented a donation to Mr. Conti.

### **Adjournment**

With no further business Dr. Berry asked for a motion to adjourn. Ms. Bradford made the motion which was seconded by Ms. Malysko. Dr. Berry called for a vote which passed unanimously without objection and the meeting was adjourned at 2:12 p.m.

The Education Committee will meet again on June 20, 2024.