

September 24, 2017

Tim Flannery
Department of Legislative Audit
427 South Chapelle
Pierre, SD 57501

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LEGISLATIVE AUDIT

Tim,

Here are my responses to the questions posed by Senator Peters and Representative Hunhoff. I will not attend the hearing on October 5 & 6. Please extend my thanks to the Senator and Representative for the opportunity to respond in writing.

1. Please explain what your role and responsibilities were for both the first and second GEAR UP grants.
 - a. For the first GEAR UP grant, I served as the Secretary of Education for the state (2003 – 2008). We applied for the original GEAR UP grant to support a summer Honors program that had started at the South Dakota School of Mines & Technology. The program, which provided opportunities for Native American High School students to remain engaged in academic coursework during the summer, appeared to have promise but lacked funding to expand the number of students who participated. The grant, which generated about \$1.1 million/year, provided additional funding to support the expansion of the Honors Program. The original GEAR UP grant was for six years.
 - b. The second GEAR UP grant began in 2011 (I believe). I was at USD at the time and was not involved in the re-application process. Dan Guericke, director of Mid Central Educational Cooperative (MCEC), asked me to be involved during the 2012 – 13 year to provide technical assistance on issues related to GEAR UP and the other programs (i.e. College Access Challenge Grant) that focused on the academic needs of Native American students. This assistance included regular correspondence with the director on questions or issues that may arise related to the grant and the discussion and formation of an Advisory Board that would assist in the coordination of programs designed to improve educational opportunities for Native students. In 2013 – 14 I began a two-year employment with MCEC and worked on three contracts. The largest contract was with the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) which involved work on the Cross-State Learning Collaborative project. A second contract was with the Board of Regents in South Dakota (SDBOR). That contract involved working with the statewide teacher residency program and a leadership development program designed for K-12 building principals. The third contract was with GEAR UP where I chaired an Advisory Board that met monthly. The primary objective of the Board was to coordinate programs that were designed to assist Native American Students. The programs included the College Access Challenge Grant, Jump Start, TRIO and the Bridge programs. I coordinated the planning,

materials and presenters for each meeting and communicated with the Task Force members about agenda items. The GEAR UP contract generated less than 15% of my total income with MCEC.

2. Please provide the timeline of your work with the GEAR UP grants as a consultant or employee of the Mid Central Educational Cooperative.
 - a. 2012 – 13 – Contract with MCEC to provide technical assistance to the Director on issues related to GEAR UP and other related programs.
 - b. 2013 – 14 – Employed by MCEC to work on three contracts. Contracting agencies included CCSSO, SDBOR and MCEC.
3. Who appointed you to the GEAR UP Advisory Board?
 - a. Director Dan Guericke invited me to join the GEAR UP Advisory Board.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rick Melmer", written in a cursive style.

Rick Melmer