



BUILDING A CULTURE OF COLLABORATION IN LOUISIANA THROUGH CCPI-STEM

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Collaboration. It's a concept that seems so simple but can be so elusive, especially in the competitive world of higher education.

Educational institutions within the same state often compete with each other for the best students, the most talented faculty, for limited state funds, and for highly competitive grants. So, they can sometimes be reluctant to collaborate.

But last spring, when Baton Rouge Community College (BRCC) hosted a CCPI-STEM in-person meeting of community and technical colleges from across Louisiana, collaboration proved to be the key to unlocking educational opportunities for students—and for colleges—in our state.

The CCPI-STEM meeting was a first-of-its-kind gathering that brought together chancellors, administrators, faculty, and grant professionals from the 11 campuses of the Louisiana Community and Technical College System to discuss STEM grants.

What struck me most was the openness in the room. The cooperation. The collaboration. When colleagues from across our state came together to share ideas, I witnessed the true strength of the Louisiana Community and Technical College system. The conversations, connections, shared challenges and outcomes that came from that day reaffirmed my belief in how critical it is to build a culture of collaboration on our campuses and across our systems of higher education.

One of the most encouraging outcomes of the meeting was the way campuses stepped up to support each other: Colleges with grant writers offered to assist those without grant writers; a campus leader who had secured an NSF award provided valuable insights on how to develop more competitive proposals; and the creation of a Grant Administrators Group to provide structure, continuity, and shared leadership across our system.

While outcomes like new templates and project management tools will certainly follow, the real achievement of this meeting was cultural.

By building trust, sharing resources, and lifting each other up—by fostering a *culture of collaboration*—we can expand what is possible for our institutions and for the students we serve.

As one meeting participant aptly said: “When we come together across campuses, we can accomplish far more than we can alone.”

I have long been a proponent of intentional culture-building on my own campus at Baton Rouge Community College. We strive toward a culture of excellence, accountability, leadership and collaboration.

But this CCPI-STEM meeting proves that we must also turn that culture of collaboration outward, toward our entire systems and toward our states, to help shape a brighter future for higher education across the nation.

In Louisiana, collaboration is no longer just an aspiration. It is becoming our practice.

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