



STATE OF MICHIGAN  
 JOCELYN BENSON, SECRETARY OF STATE  
 DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
 LANSING

**Task force on Women in Sports  
 Meeting Minutes**

Date: November 20, 2019  
 Time: 1:00 p.m.  
 Location: St. Clair County Community College  
 Welcome Center  
 735 Erie Street  
 Port Huron, Michigan 48060

The second meeting of the Task Force on Women in Sports was called to order by Chairperson/Secretary Benson at 1:08 p.m.

**Task Force Attendees**

	<b>Present</b>	<b>Absent</b>
Chairperson/Secretary Benson	X	
Penny Allen-Cook	X	
Dr. Ketra Armstrong	X	
Kathy Beauregard*	X	
Keri Becker*	X	
Lorin Cartwright	X	
Carolyn Cassin	X	
Dr. Judi Brown Clarke		X
Cali Crawford	X	
Joanne Gerstner	X	
Jennifer Granger	X	
Mike Guswiler*	X	
Carol Hutchins	X	
Sam Mullet	X	
Erika Swilley		X

\*Kathy Beauregard, Keri Becker and Mike Guswiler participated via telephone for the meeting.

Task Force Advisory Members attending in person included: Dr. Ramona Cox, Dr. Dan Gould, Meg Seng, Mark Uyl and Malia Xie (Ralph C. Wilson Jr Foundation);

Task Force Advisory Members participating by telephone included: Heather Lyke, Suzy Merchant, Heather Mitts Feeley, Patti Phillips, and Scott Pioli.

Karen Issokson-Silver, Vice President, Research & Evaluation; and Sarah Axelson, MPA, Senior Director, Advocacy were invited to present as national experts from the Women's Sports Foundation.

Ryan Kelley from Wayne State University Athletics attended the meeting as special guest of Secretary Benson.

### **Welcome, Introductions and Updates**

Chairperson/Secretary Benson welcomed everyone to the first joint meeting with the Task Force and Advisory Members, and thanked St. Clair County Community College for hosting the meeting.

Mr. Peter Lacey, Vice President of Student Services, welcomed the Task Force to SC4 and provided a brief background on their sports program, in particular SC4 MPOWERS (Michigan Promoters of Women's Equal Rights in Sports), which advocates for recruitment and advancement of women coaches and athletes.

- Celina Grondin (SC4) and Nancy Winzer (City of Port Huron Sports) also addressed the group and provided an update on their community efforts to keep students interested and playing sports.

### **Chair's Report**

Since the last meeting:

- There were several sub conversations/discussions regarding:
  1. Opportunities for female athletes K-12
  2. Opportunities for female athletes college /professional level
  3. Opportunities for females to work in the sports industry (and as general manager or president of sports team)
- Research groups were collectively identified.
- Some of the questions that still need to be answered were identified.
- In October there were several women's sports events that were attended by various Task Force members, which were very productive.
  - A few of the events included the WSF Gala, espnW Summit, Aspen Institute, and the Women Leaders in College Sports Convention (where the Task Force had a presence).

Chairperson/Secretary Benson reiterated the vision and goals for the Task Force overall:

1. Goal 1 – historic assessment, identify and define the problem.
2. Goal 2 – recommendations on solutions.
  - a. Legislation
  - b. Funding
  - c. Programs
  - d. Policies/Incentives
3. Develop stakeholders to advocate for implementation of solutions

The final report on work and successes will be issued the last year. The Task Force hopes to influence and define work around Title IX for the next 50 years.

### **Goals for the Meeting**

1. Review current research
  - a. What questions remain unanswered?
  - b. What areas should we take a closer look at?
  - c. What additional data do we need to collect?
2. Discuss next steps and future meetings
  - a. Start forming possible recommendations
  - b. Meeting in January or February to review entire work – release in spring at annual meeting

Dr. Ketra Armstrong provided an update on the work she has been doing (with the Michigan Institute for Research on Women and Gender) to develop a survey specific for the Michigan Task Force.

### **Public Comment**

Several students from St. Clair County Community College addressed the Task Force about their experiences playing sports.

Rosella Lochirco, a senior at Kalamazoo College, spoke to the group about writing her senior thesis on women in sports.

Amber, an assistant coach at SC4, has several running clubs and discussed lifelong friends through sports. She thanked the Task Force for the work they are doing.

Sue McDowell, Commission Central Women's Hockey Association, addressed the Task Force:

- Provided an overview of girls'/women's ice hockey in Michigan.
- She is a child of Title IX and played ice hockey when no women were playing.
- Her father put together a women's hockey team for her.
- She played at the college level.
- Leagues are mostly private as rinks are expensive – it's hard to sue for gender / locker room issues when they are private leagues.

Tracy Ruben, a coach with Detroit PAL and high school sports in Detroit also spoke to the group:

- She played as part of Detroit Demolition
- Self-assurance goes hand-in-hand with sports.
- When her mother played sports, and boys showed up on field, her mom had to leave – her mother helped changed that.
- Coaches need help – men coaches fear putting girls in their car to drive to practice or a game - what do they do?

### **Presentation of Existing Research**

Malia Xie, from the Ralph C. Wilson Jr Foundation, presented on the “State of Play – Southeast Michigan” report.

- Focused on youth sports for this task force/youth focus groups.
- Worked with Aspen Institute

- More than just sports – mental health, cognitive, preparing for success.
- Understanding why kids are dropping out.
  - Example – winning falls way down on the list for kids – parents think kids want to play because they like to win, but kids want to be with other kids.
- School facilities, non-profit programs, all partners need to work together.
- 60 percent of parents don't think it's important that their kids play sports – understanding why is important so youth get opportunities.
  - Active parents = active kids
- Important to get women coaches – not all parents let girls play if male coach.

Malia played a commercial for the Task Force that aired to start conversations among parents to change the youth sports experience.

Dr. Dan Gould and Jill Kochanek, from Michigan State Institute for the Study of Youth Sports, presented on “The Status of Girls and Women in Sports” report.

- Participation rates among girls/women parallel national trends.
- Train coaches to meet needs of competence
  - Needs to feel like belong and included – motivated to participate
- Encourages Task Force to prioritize tracking – can't tell how many play sports and which sports.
- There are very few women in leadership positions in professional men's sports in Michigan.
- There are no women's pro teams in MI – leverage semi pro teams to bring in professional female teams.

Davina Nguyen, SOS student intern from MSU, presented on collegiate coaches and leadership for women at the university level.

- Discrepancy in women's coaching – no female coaches for men's teams.
- Some universities have more male coaches for female teams.
- Statistics broken down by Division I, II and III – all show lack of women leadership
- Kathy Beauregard is the only DI female athletic director in Michigan.

Chairperson/Secretary Benson asked if doing sight visits at all or some of the DI/II/III school districts in next steps?

Karen Issokson-Silver, Vice President, Research & Evaluation; and Sarah Axelson, MPA, Senior Director, Advocacy presented on Chasing Equity.

- Learnings over four decades
- Doing work with the Wilson Foundation
- Included adult leader survey (can model work using that survey tool)
- New research – chasing equity – examine the landscape
- Challenges exist at every level – youth to women in the workplace
- Report itself focuses on key highlights – participation, barriers and benefits, calls to action (started with 200 and narrowed down)
- Using Chasing Equity report as springboard to develop stretch goals (what they are calling goals)
- Would like to engage entire Task Force in next phase – share with group first before release in January.

- Equity Project will kick off in February / first piece in January with National survey of young people and their parents (boys and girls) on entry and exit from sports.

Sarah provided an update on Title IX related to Michigan (requested by the Task Force at the last meeting):

- Michigan is in line with national trend for participation – but some states are doing better than national trend.
- While in line with national average, there is room for growth.
- MN and NY two of the top states.

Chairperson/Secretary Benson asked if the Task Force should look at the top five states and what their laws are?

Task Force took recess at 3:05 p.m.

Task Force reconvened at 3:17 p.m.

### **Open Discussion: New Research and Unanswered Questions**

- Identify more male advocates that will step to the plate - administrators, coaches, etc.
- parents need to encourage their kids to get into community sports – encourage parents to think outside of the box and get daughter in football or hockey.
- Problem with professional sports, if you were working and got paid for a professional sport, you lost your insurance – had to get creative.
- It is important to expand definition of sport (example: dance) or it makes it tough to give credibility. Once gets credibility, will see at youth levels.
- SB 600 is going after health and physical ed in schools. Will this harm what the Task Force is doing?
- Need to be involved in legislation – topic at next meeting?

Chairperson/Secretary Benson asked the Task Force what data needs to be collected yet between now and spring, both qualitative and quantitative? And if conducting a survey – what communities do we want to survey?

- Survey boys and girls clubs, YWCA, and community parks and recreation.
- Challenge is trying to have one size fits all – caution to prioritize info we need or too complex and won't be functional.
- Break out in parts – target leaders (high school, youth community).
  - What is their profile – how did they get there – what were the bridges that promoted their success – their experiences – organization culture that are best practices.
- Ketra indicated plan to launch Michigan survey in early January
  - Will send to all prior for feedback to select target markets –
  - Give it a month to collect data – early March will have data to report.
- There are a cluster of schools that have real high participation rates, and one that has a real low participation rate
  - Do some observations or research to see what the difference is between the two?
- Mark Uyl stated that MHSAA can obtain names and email addresses of coaches, athletic directors, etc., fairly quickly.

- Identify male leaders and ask why they think – talk to owners of professional sports teams.
- Ask those that drop out of sports why.
- Chair/Secretary Benson agreed good idea to survey men and professional owners – not sure how to accomplish?
- Ketra stated one survey can go to women coaches and one survey can go to men coaches.
- Task Force agreed needs to go to male population – valuable feedback and recommendation.
- What do we want to know about men who might want to be advocates – what is the biggest questions right now?
- Understanding their perception of barriers – the culture of inclusive or exclusive – attitudes, perceptions and suggestions to make better from those that have power to improve trenches.
- Questions can be tweaked depending on audience.
- Survey questions do pertain to attrition rate – from leader perspective.
- Female coaches don't want to become coaches – how can we change that?
- Need to get down to the nuts and bolts of why - various reasons, but if can hone in on one or two and make less prevalent.
- Most coaches are men until national level. Need female role models earlier while younger.
- More female coaches needed at every level. Can be ongoing research and recognized as deeper dive needed – can recommend partnership with institutes to do the deeper dive.
- Possibly put together some sub committees that can bring points forward we want or work with collegiate groups to bring back info on the topics we are asking.
- Site visits to DI/II/III programs to add to numbers.

### **Next Steps and Future Meetings**

Two key components over next few months:

1. Ketra's Survey
2. Site visits with qualitative interviews.
  - Chair/Secretary Benson conducted a site visit at Wayne State University this morning.
  - Asked Task Force to contact her if interested in gathering qualitative data at site visits.
  - What individual interviews should be set up with athletics at every level?
  - Gender bias has to be part of conversation.
  - Also need to include men that aren't proactive and find out why they are against - section of barriers we are missing.
  - Agreed there are ways to frame questions.

Chairperson/Secretary Benson asked if there was further discussion needed or comments – none indicated.

### **Next Meeting(s)**

1. The next meeting will be held in February, prior to the April annual meeting to discuss and finalize.
2. April Annual meeting will be in Detroit.

3. Will then meet quarterly – in fall and summer to focus on solutions.
4. Looking for places to host next year.

Chairperson/Secretary Benson again thanked St. Clair County Community College for hosting.

Mark Uyl invited the Task Force to attend the annual MHSAA “Women in Sports Leadership” event in Lansing on February 2-3, 2020. Secretary Benson is the keynote speaker. There will be breakout sessions involving the Task Force. Please reach out to Mark directly if you are interested in attending.

Pete Lacey offered a will tour of the SC4 sport facility for anyone interested in staying to attend.

Chairperson/Secretary Benson thanked everyone and closed the meeting at 3:55 p.m.