

**Corporation for National and Community Service**  
**Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting**  
**June 24, 2016**  
**10:00 a.m. – 11:07 a.m., ET**

The Board of Directors for the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) convened in Washington, DC. The following members of the Board were present:

Shamina Singh, Chair

Dean Reuter, Vice Chair

Rick Christman (by telephone)

Mona Dixon (by telephone)

Victoria Hughes

**Chair's Opening Remarks**

Board Chair Shamina Singh called the meeting to order and welcomed attendees and her fellow board members, and noted that although Eric Liu was absent, he had participated in the Board retreat the previous day.

Ms. Singh briefed the public on the activities of the Board the prior day during a site visit to the Whitman Walker Health Clinic, which provides critical health and legal services in Washington, D.C. The Clinic receives support both through the Social Innovation Fund and multiple AmeriCorps grant programs. The Board heard personal stories from AmeriCorps members and alumni and from the Clinic's staff about how much they value the support CNCS gives them to advance their mission.

Ms. Singh said that after the Board came back from that visit, the members received a number of updates on the agency. They received a thorough report from CEO Wendy Spencer; a briefing from Dana Bourne, the Chief Grants Officer; and another from Lori Giblin, the Chief Risk Officer. The Board had also received an update from Deborah Jeffrey, the Inspector General. The Board discussed government relations, partnerships, and engagement with Kim Allman, the Director of Government Relations; John Kelly, Deputy Chief of Staff and Director of Partnerships; and with Ted Miller, Chief of External Affairs. The AmeriCorps State and National Director Bill Basl and AmeriCorps VISTA Director Max Finberg also made presentations to the Board.

Ms. Singh stated that a big focus of the retreat was accountability and oversight and that over the years, CNCS has built a culture of accountability and strong systems for monitoring and oversight, and those systems are working. In an enterprise as large and decentralized as national

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service, with thousands of grantees and service sites, accountability is a shared responsibility. Everyone needs to do their part. Compliance and following the rules is a must.

Ms. Singh then called upon the CEO, Ms. Wendy Spencer, to present to the Board.

**Chief Executive Officer's Report**

Ms. Spencer reported to the Board and public as follows:

- The Senate Appropriations Committee approved the FY 2017 bill that funds CNCS. The bill provided \$1.03 billion for CNCS, an amount that fulfilled CNCS's request for AmeriCorps and Senior Corps and provided a \$1 million increase for State Commission support. Unfortunately, the bill cut \$50 million from the Social Innovation Fund, which would essentially eliminate the program. During the last six years, the SIF program has proven itself to be a tremendous model for funding evidence-based solutions to many of the country's most pressing challenges and raised almost twice as much in non-federal matching commitments as was appropriated. Ms. Spencer noted that CNCS will continue to advocate for full funding for SIF and the innovative solutions that the program enables.
- The winners of the second Social Innovation Fund Pay for Success grant competition were announced in May. The \$6.1 million in grants will advance and evaluate emerging models that align payment for social services with verified outcomes. The new SIF Pay for Success grantees include the Harvard Kennedy School Government Performance Lab, Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC), and the Sorenson Impact Center at the University of Utah's David Eccles School of Business, in partnership with Social Finance, Inc. Within the next few months, all of the Pay for Success grantees will hold open competitions to select communities in need of services, focusing on challenges within SIF's focus areas of economic opportunity, healthy futures, and youth development. Combined with SIF's investment of \$12 million to 8 current PFS grantees working on feasibility and transaction structuring, this new investment of \$6.1 million has the potential to catalyze nearly 100 Pay for Success models across the country.
- In May, we saw the fifth anniversary of the tornado that devastated Joplin, Missouri. National service has been an amazing success story in response to an enormous tragedy. CNCS service in Joplin began within hours of the tornado's touchdown, even before sunrise, when the first team from AmeriCorps St. Louis Emergency Response Team arrived—and continues to provide service today. Over the last five years, 425 AmeriCorps members and disaster services team members have served in Joplin. National service saved the city \$17.7 million in what was required for the city's federal disaster relief matching contributions in the first year alone. During that time, AmeriCorps members helped more than 3,000 households and coordinated many of the more than 150,000 volunteers who came to Joplin to provide over 1 million hours of service. We are honored to be part of Joplin's recovery. Joplin also made CNCS better

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at providing support to communities struck by disasters, and we continue to support communities across the country.

- In fact, it has been a tough spring, with extensive flooding in the South. So far, 537 AmeriCorps members have deployed to Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas and are really making a huge difference on the ground supporting families struck by the flooding.
- AmeriCorps members continue to serve in Flint, Michigan to help that community deal with its lead-polluted water. Some 200 national service participants have been deployed or cross-trained or refocused to help that community, including all three lines of AmeriCorps service including VISTA and NCCC, Senior Corps RSVP programs, and Operation AmeriCorps grantees. The national service participants are working very closely on the ground with our grantees and local organizations like the United Way of Genesee County, the Mayor's Office, Boys and Girls Clubs, Mission for Hope, the Michigan Red Cross, Food Corps, and many other organizations. This major national service push has delivered results. Members have distributed 5,100 cases of water and 4,000 water filters. Members have canvassed over 6,000 homes, talking face-to-face with individuals and families about water safety and what families can do deal with the crisis. Ms. Spencer said that the agency's hearts and prayers are with Flint, as well as our service.
- CNCS continues to launch new initiatives and expand existing partnerships to more communities. The pilot Summer Opportunity AmeriCorps program is underway as we work to introduce more young people to the benefits of service. CNCS is committing up to \$15 million in college scholarships over the next three years to youth between the ages of 14 and 17 who serve over the summer break. We have 80 Summer Opportunity AmeriCorps members serving with West Virginia's Energy Express program to support summer reading and nutrition initiatives in rural areas. The Corps Network will engage 659 members in 14 states on a number of environmental stewardship projects, including building and maintaining trails and campgrounds, removing invasive species, and improving community green space. The National Summer Learning Association will have nearly 200 members across Chicago, Dallas, and New York City to work on educational and mentoring projects, focus on environmental stewardship, and organize some 6,700 additional volunteers in those communities.
- In early May, CNCS announced the expansion of the Resilience AmeriCorps program to 18 new cities through partnerships with Catholic Charities USA, Enterprise Community partners, Lutheran Services in America, and New York State's Governor's Office of Storm Recovery. This will build on the work being done in the initial 10 Resilience AmeriCorps cities, which was implemented by Cities of Service. Resilience AmeriCorps is a unique federal public-private partnership that helps communities plan and implement efforts to become more resilient to shocks and stresses, including extreme weather and other impacts of climate change.

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- During the United State of Women summit in Washington, DC, CNCS announced our newest partnership with the Department of Justice – the Elder Justice AmeriCorps. This \$2 million grant initiative will provide legal assistance and support services to victims of elder abuse, neglect and exploitation, the majority of whom are women. Our grantee, Equal Justice Works, will use this grant to support 300 AmeriCorps members in 15 states and the District of Columbia to connect these vulnerable older adults with highly skilled AmeriCorps members. The members will provide legal services to ensure our seniors have the care and support they need and deserve.
- Ms. Spencer recounted that she had the honor of representing the Obama Administration in San Diego during the third and final round of the Promise Zone announcements earlier in June. This initiative is led by the Department of Housing and Urban Development, and combines the resources of CNCS and other federal partners with local leaders and resources to address local priorities in high-poverty communities. AmeriCorps VISTAs will support each of the Promise Zones.
- Ms. Spencer also announced that after a search to find the most cost-effective option for a new AmeriCorps NCCC campus, the Denver metro area will continue to host a facility that trains young leaders. The new location in Aurora, Colorado will employ 24 people and host approximately 320 AmeriCorps NCCC members annually.
- CNCS recently completed the last of four regional training conferences. Almost 2,000 leaders from our national service programs and state commissions, and many CNCS staff, gathered to share best practices and attend valuable training sessions to learn how to better manage programs. The training conferences are great opportunities to reiterate important messages to the state commissions and the grantees. As the Board Chair said in her opening remarks, Congress has entrusted CNCS with increased funding this year and that trust requires us to be careful stewards of taxpayer funds. Our jobs include vigilant monitoring and oversight to ensure that we know the rules related to that funding and follow them to the letter.
- During the first week of May, Ms. Spencer traveled to Alaska to get a firsthand look at the national service programs in the nation’s largest state. She had the opportunity to meet some of the 630 Senior Corps and AmeriCorps members serving at 150 locations around the state. During her visit, CNCS announced eight new grants and projects comprising a federal investment of \$1.5 million that will leverage another \$512,000 in local resources to support the new initiatives in the state. One of the many highlights of the trip was a press conference with Anchorage Mayor Berkowitz, who made the announcement that his city has joined the Employers of National Service. Mayor Berkowitz is a big supporter of AmeriCorps and the Peace Corps because he understands the great benefits of hiring program alumni, who possess many skills and offer great leadership for future job openings in the city.

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- Finally, Employers of National Service continues to grow; it now has 380 employers representing nearly 1.9 million jobs. This week, the U.S. Conference of Mayors is meeting in Indianapolis, and on the Conference's agenda is a resolution calling on all mayors from America's largest cities to join Employers of National Service. [The resolution [passed unanimously](#).] President Obama launched the Employers of National Service initiative during the AmeriCorps 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration at the White House. The initiative recruits employers in the federal, private, and nonprofit sectors and asks them to recognize the qualities that AmeriCorps and Peace Corps members can bring to their workplace. Ms. Spencer thanked Boston Mayor Marty Walsh and Phoenix Mayor Greg Stanton for being champions for national service and making this resolution a reality.

Ms. Spencer closed by noting that this recognition by the Conference of Mayors is a strong endorsement of the work that our AmeriCorps members and Senior Corps volunteers are doing in this country. We are focused on the challenges our nation faces and we are proud of how national service works as a solution to those challenges. Ms. Spencer noted that service is not only central to how we solve our nation's problems, it is also how we expand opportunity and is a powerful way to bring Americans together. She closed by thanking all of those engaged in and supporting national service, including the Governor's State Service Commissions, for their hard work and important contributions.

### **Chair's Remarks**

The Board Chair thanked Ms. Spencer and introduced those who were going to make the first presentation after the CEO. Ms. Singh stated that one of the priorities of CNCS is to maximize the return on public investment by funding what works and using evidence in its grantmaking. The first presentation was on the results of a recent study about Diplomas Now, a school transformation model for high-need schools. The program engages City Year AmeriCorps members in identifying students who were off-track in attendance, behavior, and course performance and providing them with intensive academic, social, and emotional support as well as case management to get them back on track. The three presenters for the first presentation were Michael Brown, the CEO and co-founder of City Year; Jim Balfanz, a City Year AmeriCorps alumnus and the current President of City Year; and his brother, Dr. Robert Balfanz, a professor at the Center for the Social Organization of Schools at John Hopkins University's School of Education. Robert Balfanz is the leader and co-founder of Diplomas Now, and has published widely on secondary school reform.

### **Guest Speakers for the First Presentation (via telephone) [referring to [these slides](#)]**

Mr. Brown noted that City Year is a proud member of the AmeriCorps National Service Network. Everything that City Year does is powered by AmeriCorps. More than 3,000 City Year AmeriCorps members are serving in more than 300 of the highest-need urban schools in 28 cities nationwide, and they're reaching 200,000 students every day with critically needed

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academic and social and emotional support. In many of the schools across the country, they work as part of the Diplomas Now collaborative. In 2010, the U.S. Department of Education awarded an Innovation Validation grant to expand Diplomas Now to reach across the country. This multi-year grant supports one of the largest randomized control studies ever conducted of a secondary school model. The study was led by MDRC, a nonpartisan nonprofit education and social policy research organization. Mr. Brown concluded by noting how national service is versatile in its ability to help communities, and, increasingly, demonstrates using evidence-based practices and metrics that AmeriCorps members are able to achieve transformational outcomes in those communities.

Mr. Jim Balfanz explained that the Diplomas Now program is anchored in the early warning indicators – poor attendance, sustained poor behavior, and course failure in English and Math – can predict whether a student is on or off-track to graduation as early as sixth grade. Absent intervention, a student with an early warning indicator has a 25 percent chance of graduating on time versus a 75 percent chance of graduating on time for students without early warning indicators. Diplomas Now was designed specifically to address and eliminate these early warning indicators.

Mr. Balfanz provided a quick background on the model and the context of the study, which will last seven years and produce five reports, and involves thousands of AmeriCorps members across the country involved in the Diplomas Now program. The study focused on four critical research questions: (1) can the program be implemented and sustained in high-need schools across the country; (2) does Diplomas Now increase the percentage of students without early warning indicators; (3) does the program help improve entire schools; and (4) does the program lead to better outcomes for the most vulnerable children? The initial results of the research suggest the answer to all of the questions is yes.

Dr. Robert Balfanz explained that, with the highest level of evidence, Diplomas Now reduces early warning indicators. In the Diplomas Now schools, there was a positive and statistically significant increase in the percentage of sixth and ninth graders with no early warning indicators. This is exactly the outcome that Diplomas Now is designed to achieve. And that the program's ability – now documented with rigorous evidence – to get these kids through middle school without early warning indicators dramatically increases the chances that they will graduate from high school.

This evidence is the first large-scale experimental data that shows that Diploma Now (or any program) can consistently reverse students' trajectory from the path towards dropping out to the path towards high school graduation. They have shown conclusively that this is consistently possible even in the toughest environment – which means they really have to scale those strategies up, because they can no longer say they don't know what to do. The study also validates that Diploma Now reduces chronic absenteeism in the highest-need schools. Finally, the study validates AmeriCorps as a solution to the high school dropout crisis, as AmeriCorps members power Diplomas Now.

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**Remarks by the Chair and Board member Dean Reuter for the Second Presentation**

Ms. Singh next stated that she was thrilled to continue a tradition that the Board started at the last Board meeting of recognizing young and very smart people who are making a difference through service. She turned the introduction over to Vice Chair Dean Reuter.

Mr. Reuter spoke of the Stars of Service Award that recognizes young people who have demonstrated outstanding examples of volunteering and service. Recipients are selected in coordination with the Governor-appointed State Service Commissions. The award highlights the power of service and helps create a pipeline of young leaders who will continue to give back throughout their lives.

Mr. Reuter announced that the Board of Directors is pleased to recognize Ms. Jessica Waters from Beavercreek, Ohio, as a Star of Service. The reasons that Jessica is so deserving of this award begin with the fact that she is passionate about raising awareness of epilepsy, a condition she has battled since she was 11 years old. In 2010, she founded Cupcakes for Camp, an organization that raises money to send children with epilepsy to summer camps. By selling cupcakes and other baked goods, she's raised more than \$10,000 to help numerous children with epilepsy attend a summer camp. Jessica has also been an active volunteer with the Epilepsy Foundation of Western Ohio, volunteering more than 2,100 hours. She has just completed her freshman year at the University of Kentucky, and she's continuing her volunteer service as the Assistant Philanthropic Chair of her sorority. Additionally, she's raising funds for Kentucky's Children's Hospital, and has logged more than 4,300 volunteer hours.

**Presentation of the President's Volunteer Service Award**

Ms. Singh presented the President's Volunteer Service Award to Ms. Jessica Waters.

Ms. Waters thanked the Board for her award and the recognition. She stated that she would never stop serving because she has noticed first-hand that the impact of service multiplies, and that what you do for one person they do for others, and it never stops. It's that ripple effect that she loves so much about AmeriCorps. Making a difference has touched her a lot. She is now on the Board of Directors for Cupcakes for Camp, and in other states there are now teenagers who are hoping that their own Cupcakes for Camp initiatives in their communities are successful. Ms. Waters said that she sees that wanting to do more only inspires other people to do more, and that's how good things happen.

The Board and CEO Spencer commended Ms. Waters for being a shining light for volunteerism in so many ways and for being such an amazing leader.

**Conclusion of the Meeting**

Ms. Singh concluded the Board meeting by thanking the members of the Board, the CNCS staff, and the members of the public for joining. She noted that this meeting covered very important

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topics about how national service is a solution for America, from disasters in Flint or Joplin to evidence-based proof that we're solving the high school dropout crisis, and how volunteerism embodied in amazing people like Jessica Waters is so inspiring. She adjourned the Board meeting at 11:07 a.m.