



Rob Dixon, Director

MO Dept. of Economic Development

Before becoming director, Rob served as the President/CEO of the Missouri Community College Association. MCCA is a membership organization for Missouri's community colleges, providing government advocacy, networking, and education resources for its members.

Rob also served in a variety of roles at the Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce, including leadership and management of staff and programs in economic and workforce development, public affairs, local government policy, communications, community development, and strategic planning. He also served as the Executive Director of the Hollister Area of Chamber of Commerce.

Rob joined the U.S. Marine Corps after high school, where he served as an intelligence analyst in Afghanistan and Pakistan immediately after the 9/11 terrorist attacks. He was recognized for leadership and performance as a U.S. Marine. Rob received an honorable discharge as a sergeant after five years in the Marine Corps.

Rob has a Master of Public Administration degree from Missouri State University, a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from the University of Missouri – St. Louis, and an Associate of Arts in Political Science from St. Charles Community College.

He is married to Melanie Dixon, and they have one son, Eddie.



Zora Mulligan, Commissioner

MO Dept. of Higher Education and Workforce Development

Zora Mulligan has served as Missouri's Commissioner of Higher Education since August 2016. During her time as commissioner, Zora and her team have partnered with colleges and universities around the state to substantially improve transfer for Missouri students, increase graduation rates by offering alternatives to remedial coursework, and implement new rules that give public colleges and universities greater ability to meet statewide and regional workforce needs.

In 2018, Zora and Missouri's Director of Economic Development co-led Talent for Tomorrow, an initiative that built a statewide coalition of corporate executives, educators, community leaders, legislators, and members of the executive branch to develop and advocate for a comprehensive suite of proposals to address workforce needs. Those proposals, which included restructuring state government to bring the agencies responsible for postsecondary education, workforce development, and economic research together; funding for public colleges and universities to develop or expand academic programs that lead to jobs in high-demand occupations; and a full-tuition grant program for adults, were featured in Governor Mike Parson's 2019 State of the State address and adopted by the General Assembly during the 2019 legislative session.

Zora is a native of West Plains, Missouri, and a graduate of Drury College and the University of Kansas. She previously served as chief of staff to the University of Missouri System president, executive director of the Missouri Community College Association, and assistant attorney general. She lives in Jefferson City with her daughter Anna Lea.





Springfield
Area Chamber of Commerce



Katie Jo Wheeler, Deputy Director

MO Dept. of Natural Resources

Katie Jo Wheeler is Deputy Department Director of the Missouri Department of Natural Resources. She works with the environmental regulatory programs, administration, communications, and legal counsel.

Wheeler joined the Department as General Counsel in 2017.

Prior to joining the Department, she practiced law in Kansas City, advising businesses and individuals on environmental issues related to regulatory compliance, litigation, and business transactions. Katie Jo is a lifelong Missourian and a proud graduate of Baylor University and the University of Missouri School of Law.

