

March 2011

Strategic Master Plan Update

The 2008 Strategic Master Plan for Higher Education provided a 10-year blueprint for developing the educational potential of our state's citizens. The plan stresses the need for increased funding and accountability, more research and economic innovation, and improved student preparation, participation, and success. In 2011, the HECB will develop the first four-year update to the Strategic Master Plan, working with the state's public and independent higher education institutions, other state education agencies and boards, professional organizations, faculty, staff, students, legislators and the Governor's Office.

The Board's primary work this year will be to reaffirm the overarching goal of the Strategic Master Plan for Higher Education: our state needs to dramatically raise educational attainment. To develop this update, the HECB will review progress resulting from strategies employed toward the three major objectives outlined in the plan and identify those areas to focus future effort. Declining state revenues during the intervening Great Recession and slow recovery will continue to challenge assumptions about growth and expansion opportunities for higher education.

SMP Goal: Raise Educational Attainment

Objective: Focus on preparation, participation, transition, success

Despite deep budget cuts of the last three years and continuing uncertainty, there is still much being done to keep the focus on developing college-ready students, classroom-ready teachers, and improved student pathways.

Strategies

a. Create higher expectations for all K-12 students

Revised and greatly strengthened college readiness standards in English, math, and science have been endorsed by the HECB. These standards align closely with proposed new high school graduation requirements and the Common Core State Standards.

Challenge: Moving quickly on the basic changes to align requirements will clearly communicate the commitment to providing postsecondary access to more students. Continuing to work collaboratively on any additional changes will ensure they can be implemented with minimum confusion.

b. Scale up successful student advising and mentoring programs

The HECB's GEAR UP program, working collaboratively with the targeted school districts and the state's higher education institutions, has expanded pre-college skills development services to thousands of additional students in low-income school districts.

Challenge: Programs like GEAR-UP and Navigation 101 provide support for the high school and beyond plan. Continued and expanded funding for these successful programs will be needed from both the state and federal governments.

c. Engage families and communities

The College Bound Scholarship program and the Passport to College Promise scholarship provide collaborative models for increasing community involvement by leveraging federal, state, local, and philanthropic support to increase the number of under-represented students who participate and succeed in higher education.

Challenge: The federal College Access Challenge Grant and regional partnerships such as the WashBoard.org, a coalition-driven, online scholarship matching resource, are helping expand opportunity. More emphasis is needed on these and other collaborative models.

d. Create multiple pathways from high school to college or workforce training

The HECB continues to advocate for increased support for a variety of dual credit options, including Running Start, Running Start for the Trades, Tech Prep, Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, and College in the High school.

Challenge: Improved access to a rigorous curriculum in high school that includes opportunities to earn college credit is an important strategy to ensure students graduate ready for college and career.

e. Prepare Educators for the 21st century

Educators for the 21st Century has funded Teacher Professional Development Projects, College Readiness projects in English and science, and conferences for educators, researchers, and policymakers. The HECB also conducts the Educator Needs Analysis in cooperation with the Professional Educator Standards Board.

Challenge: Continued support is needed for professional development for teachers and administrators to ensure our educators have the tools they need to effectively engage families and communities to close the achievement gap, raise student proficiency, provide high quality academic advising, and increase postsecondary attendance.

Objective: Promote economic growth and innovation

Higher education remains one of the state's most powerful economic engines, a force for innovation and positive change. Our institutions are on the cutting edge of discovery, opening up a world of new opportunity for this and future generations of Washingtonians.

Strategies

a. Build a coherent approach to workforce development

- The HECB continues to conduct ongoing periodic assessments of emerging workforce needs by updating publications documenting high employer demand occupations and identifying state and regional supply gaps.
- Support the further development of high demand and STEM degrees. Continue work with sector-focused councils and study groups (e.g. Washington Aerospace Council and the Health Care Personnel Shortage Task Force) to identify and quantify skill gaps and make the policy case for program expansion.
- Find new ways to finance work-related education and training. Continue to pilot new work-related education and training financial vehicles such as Lifelong Learning Accounts, in collaboration with other public agencies and private organizations.

b. Expand research capacity

The HECB and the Washington Economic Development Commission support the STARS Program, which brings entrepreneurial researchers to the UW and WSU to commercialize research results and support new technology-based, start-up companies.

c. Contribute to the innovation economy

- The HECB partners with the Washington Department of Commerce to help implement its Innovation Partnership Zone program and on cluster-based initiatives to help support employer/university linkages.
- The HECB works closely with the Washington Economic Development Commission to develop metrics, analysis, and policy solutions that support the critical role that talent development plays in our state's innovation capacity.

d. Help create an entrepreneurial environment.

- The HECB administers the Entrepreneurs-in-Residence activity under the STARS program to help shift the academic research culture towards research commercialization and new company start-ups.
- The HECB's Fund for Innovation provides a competitive environment among public and private higher education institutions to pilot and replicate creative strategies to address the critical system improvements identified in the *Strategic Master Plan*.

Objective: Develop performance-based improvement strategies

The Washington State Legislature is working this session to develop outcomes-driven funding models for higher education. The Governor has recommended higher education adopt the performance measures set forth in National Governor's Association's *Compete to Complete* initiative. In fall 2010, the Governor's Higher Education Funding Task Force issued a report calling for a new funding model that would raise tuition - within limits - while spurring degree production. It remains too early to fully assess how these efforts will help accomplish key improvement strategies in the current master plan.

Strategies

- Enroll more people in higher education and ensure they earn degrees.
- Develop increased capacity, technology, and distance learning.
- Use the workforce needs assessment reports to target degree expansion efforts.
- Develop new GCS (Global Challenge States) tuition and funding benchmarks.
- Advocate for continued student financial aid expansion.
- Develop incentives and accountability systems to reward progress.