



2019 Academic Credit for Prior Learning (ACPL) Report Update

ACPL: Advancing Success for Washington Adult Learners

Supporting adult learners as they complete their postsecondary certificates and degrees is essential to meeting our state's educational attainment goals and the employment needs of students and Washington employers.¹ Students come to college with skills and knowledge acquired through work, military, and other experiences. Awarding academic credit for prior learning is important to support this population of students. Academic Credit for Prior Learning (ACPL) is awarded when a student's prior learning is assessed and found to be the equivalent of specific college course outcomes, and when awarding credit is consistent with the policies of the institution.²

Awarding academic credit for prior learning accomplishes the following:

- Honors students' knowledge and skills.
- Strengthens connections between work and college.
- Accelerates students' progress toward career pathways.
- Helps Washington meet the statewide educational attainment goal of at least 70 percent of Washington adults (ages 25-44) holding a postsecondary credential.

Significant progress has been made in several areas since 2011, when legislation was enacted to increase the number of students who receive academic credit for prior learning and the number and type of credits earned, ensuring that credit is awarded only for college course-level competencies. That progress has included establishing an ongoing workgroup, developing and sharing policies and practices, and monitoring progress in an annual legislative report.

Highlight: Adult reengagement initiative

WSAC has developed a statewide initiative with multiple college and workforce partners to reengage adult learners in credential completion, *Washington College and Career Compass*. This initiative has highlighted ACPL as a best practice in academic policy in reengaging adult learners. ACPL policies are included in an institutional self-assessment of adult learner-focused policies and practices that colleges participating in the initiative will complete. ACPL will also be described in the Compass online tool for prospective adult students, aiming to increase understanding and student-initiated requests for ACPL assessments. The Compass Institutional Self-Assessment and online tool will launch in early 2020.

¹ Washington Student Achievement Council, [2017 Strategic Action Plan](#).

² The Washington State Legislature defines prior learning in RCW 28B.77.230, as "...knowledge and skills gained through work and life experience; through military training and experience; and through formal and informal education and training from in-state and out-of-state institutions including foreign institutions.

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2019 ACPL Notable Findings

For the third consecutive year, all 34 community and technical colleges, six public baccalaureate institutions, and ten Independent Colleges of Washington member institutions submitted data for the 2019 report.³ Of these 49 institutions⁴, 42 had reported data in 2016, and 49 in 2017 and 2018, allowing a four-year look at change over time in total number of ACPL credits awarded.

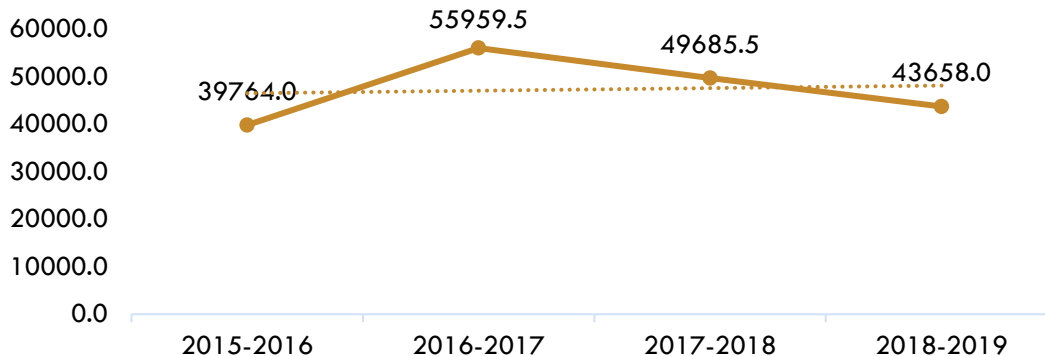
2019 prior learning credits and students receiving ACPL

During the 2018-19 academic year, Washington public and independent colleges awarded 53,995 ACPL credits that applied toward certificates or degrees. Approximately 4,099 students earned credits for prior learning.

Changes in Total ACPL Credits Awarded Over Time

- Among 42 colleges reporting in the last four years, the current year cumulative ACPL credits are 9.8 percent greater than in 2015. While the last three years have consistently been higher than 2015-16, the trend shows a slight decline overall in the last two years (Figure 1).
- For the full set of 49 colleges reporting in the last three years, the overall number of ACPL credits confirms slight decreases in the last two years (Figure 2).
- Examining ACPL credits by sector shows a more detailed view of change, including two years of slight increases in the Community and Technical Colleges, and an increase this year in the Private Baccalaureate sector (Figure 3).

Figure 1: Four-year Comparison of ACPL Credits in 42 institutions



Notes: Comparison is limited to 42 institutions reporting all four years. The credit number for 2017-2018 is higher than in the 2018 ACPL report, as WWU submitted an updated 2017-18 data survey this fall. All 2017-18 numbers and percentages previously reported have been adjusted to reflect WWU's updated data.

Source: WSAC staff analysis of ACPL data collected from institutions (fall 2016, fall 2017, fall 2018 and fall 2019).

³ Data from private career colleges were not collected for this report.

⁴ Pierce College's two campuses report combined data.

Figure 2: Three-year Comparison of ACPL Credits in 49 Institutions

Credits Awarded 2016-17	Credits Awarded 2017-18	Credits awarded 2018-2019	% Change 2016-17 to 2017-18	% Change 2017-18 to 2018-19
61,340.5	58,000.5	53,995.0	-5.4%	-6.9%

Source: WSAC staff analysis of ACPL data collected from 49 institutions (fall 2017 and fall 2018).

Figure 3: ACPL Credits by Educational Sector, 2016-17 to 2018-19

Sector Type	Number of Quarter Credits Awarded in 2016-17	Number of Quarter Credits Awarded in 2017-18	Number of Quarter Credits Awarded in 2018-19	% Change in Credits 2016-17 to 2017-18	% Change in Credits 2017-18 to 2018-19
Community and Technical Colleges	33,486.0	35,054.0	36,708.0	4.7%	4.7%
Private Baccalaureates	3,229.0	2,024.5	3,387.0	-37.3%	67.3%
Public Baccalaureates	24,625.5	20,922.0	13,900.0	-15.0%	-33.6%

Source: WSAC staff analysis of ACPL data collected from 49 institutions (Fall 2017, Fall 2018, Fall 2019)

Figure 4: Comparison of ACPL-Receiving Students and Credits by Assessment, 2016-17 to 2018-19

Category	Assessment Examples	2017-18 Total Students	2018-19 Total Students	% Change Students 2017-18 to 2018-19	2017-18 Total Quarter Credits	2018-19 Total Quarter Credits	% Change Quarter Credits 2017-18 to 2018-19
Credit by Testing	DANTES Subject Standardized Tests (DSST)	13	11	-15.4%	170.5	90.5	-46.9%
	College Level Exam Program (CLEP)	332	371	11.7%	3,844.5	4,178.0	8.7%
Prior Experiential Learning	Portfolio Review (college-level credits)	244	405	66.0 %	2,439.0	2,932.0	20.2%
Extra-Institutional Learning	American Council of Education (ACE) (military training and education)	913	771	-15.6%	21,175.0	13,074.5	-38.3%
	Occupational Crosswalks (Military MOS, other)	527	832	57.9%	14,818.0	15,770.0	6.4%
	Individual Industry Cert (e.g. NCLEX-RN)	583	1,311	124.9 %	12,733.0	14,642.0	15.0%
Course Challenges	Credit by Exam ⁴	398	471	18.3%	2,820.0	3,308.0	17.3%
Totals: (students, credits)		3,005	4,099	36.4%	58,000.0	53,995.0	-6.9%

Source: WSAC staff analysis of ACPL data collected from institutions (fall 2018 and fall 2019).

⁴ Generally, a faculty or department-created course-specific assessment.

Comparison by Categories of Prior Learning Assessment

A detailed look at the categories of prior learning assessment over a two-year period provides a more nuanced comparison of both the number of students receiving ACPL and the number of credits received per category of prior learning (Figure 4).

- *The number of students receiving academic credits for prior learning increased overall by 36.4% statewide since 2017-18. More students received credit in 2018-19 in the following areas: College Level Exam Program (CLEP), Portfolio Review, Occupational Crosswalks (military and other), Individual Certifications, and Credit by Exam. The biggest increases are in Portfolio Review, Crosswalks, and Individual Certifications. The only categories of assessment where the number of students receiving credit decreased this year were ACE (142 students fewer) and DANTES (DSST) with (two students fewer).*
- *ACPL credits in most categories of prior learning assessments have increased since 2017-18, including CLEP, Portfolio Review, Occupational Crosswalks, Individual Industry Certifications, and Credit by Exam. Again, Figure 4 data show that DSST and ACE were the only categories where total credits decreased.*

Summary of 2019 ACPL data findings

- Washington is seeing an increase in students receiving ACPL this year compared to last. Approximately 1,094 more students received credit, a 36.4 percent increase.
- Both community and technical colleges and private baccalaureate sectors show increases in the number of ACPL credits awarded in 2019.
- ACPL credits and the number of ACPL-receiving students have increased in all categories of assessment, apart from ACE and DSST. These two assessment types correspond to military training, education and testing.

Although the cumulative number of ACPL credits has decreased in the last two years, those credit decreases are clearly concentrated in ACE and DSST categories, indicating that there may be changes in policies, enrollment patterns, or other factors related to students who are veterans or military members. Colleges did not report significant policy changes in these areas, and no conclusive evidence explains this decline.

An exploration of this question with CTC and Public Baccalaureate sector leaders has yielded limited data on veteran and military student headcounts in recent years (Appendix A). From 2017-18 to 2018-19, student headcounts at CTCs for veterans/military students decreased by 768, which possibly could have an outsized impact on veteran/military ACPL credit categories. Complete data is not yet available for the Baccalaureate sectors, and merits further exploration.

ACPL Updates

Steady advancement continues in all areas of the ACPL goals outlined in statute (see Appendix B). Effective practices, policies, and updated information on ACPL have been shared in a variety of ways this year, including presentations, the ACPL handbook, an email distribution list, and a workgroup meeting.

ACPL workgroup

WSAC convened the ACPL workgroup in June 2019, which included 20 participants from all sectors across the state. The workgroup discussed and prioritized actions in the following areas:

Broadening the goal for ACPL statewide

While the workgroup recognizes the importance of reducing time to degree by increasing awarding of credit for learning outside of the college, the workgroup recommends broadening the state goal to include the awarding of credit that best fits students' goals. Some workgroup members emphasized that without addressing the type of credits and their fit with the students' degree requirements, an increase in ACPL credit quantity may not necessarily offer the most benefit to a student.

ACPL data development

The workgroup prioritized understanding demographic data of ACPL-receiving students and identifying any demographic gaps. Three institutions are working with WSAC to develop and improve an ACPL survey on disaggregated data on ACPL-receiving students: Highline College, St. Martin's University, and Washington State University. What we learn from the case studies of these institutions will inform the expansion of a disaggregated data survey for all ACPL-receiving students next year. The workgroup plans to build on this study to examine how ACPL awards affect student retention and completion.

Transferability of ACPL credit from CTCs to baccalaureate institutions

Workgroup members emphasized that policy transparency for each four-year college about acceptance, cost and process for different categories of prior learning would be very helpful for students' decision-making. Similarly, transparent CTC policies and costs can assist students in making decisions about which CTC to attend. The updated ACPL and military policies for 2019 are now included on WSAC's ACPL webpage.

Awareness, training and professional development

The workgroup prioritized continued training as well as outreach and coordination with other Councils, Commissions, and Associations. They will plan a spring summit and training that is co-located with the Intercollege Relations Commission (ICRC) meeting in April. As well, workgroup members shared ACPL information in the Washington Military Transition Council Higher Education Community of Practice and the License Portability Group, the Joint Transfer Council, and Intercollege Relations Commission.

ACPL Resources

- [ACPL handbook](#): Updated in 2018, the handbook provides sample policies and examples of crosswalks and other assessment models.
- [ACPL webpage](#): On the WSAC website, this page houses ACPL Workgroup meeting notes, workshop information, annual legislative reports, and the ACPL handbook.
- [Adult Reengagement Initiative webpage](#): As a policy tool related to adult learners' progress, ACPL fits in the WSAC Adult Reengagement Framework's completion component. This web page includes statistics, reports, resources, and 2018 Summit materials referenced in this report update.
- Updated policy links: Appendix D includes policy links for ACPL and military credit from all higher education institutions.

Next Steps

WSAC has shared findings from 2019 ACPL data with the workgroup and sector leaders, and the workgroup will examine the report information as part of its spring meeting/training. Moreover, the Council of Presidents plans to facilitate an examination of this report data with sector stakeholders to understand better the context and possible factors influencing the two-year change in the public baccalaureate sector. WSAC will offer individual institutions their multi-year ACPL data to consider as they evaluate policy and practice in 2020. WSAC will also continue to serve as a resource to institutions, sectors, and the ACPL workgroup in collaboration for student success.

Appendix A

Enrolled Veterans and Active Military Members at Public Institutions

Community and Technical Colleges

	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Veterans and Active Military Students	14,062	13,652	13,258	12,490
Percent of full head count	3.7	3.6	3.6	3.4
Head count of all students	379,480	373,437	369,709	362,862

Source: State Board for Community and Technical Colleges staff analysis of enrollment, 2019

Public Baccalaureate Institutions

	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Veterans and Active Military Students	2,902	2,911	3,123	Not available
Percent of full head count	2.1	2.1	Not available	Not available
Head count of all students	137,392	139,190	Not available	Not available

Source: Council of Presidents staff analysis of enrollment, 2019

For both SBCTC and COP data, the following categories are included in the Veterans and Active Military Students category: Chapter 30 MGIB (Montgomery GI Bill), Chapter 31 VR&E (Vocational Rehabilitation & Employment Program), Chapter 32 VEAP (Veterans Educational Assistance Program), Chapter 33 Post 9/11 Veterans, Chapter 1606 MGIB Selected Reserve, Chapter 1607 REAP (Reserve Educational Assistance Program), All other veterans receiving benefits not listed above, Active Duty (including national guard/reserves) currently using military tuition assistance, Active duty military students using military benefits, All other veterans not receiving benefits, including those who decline using their benefits.

Appendix B

Summary of Progress on ACPL Workgroup Goals

	Summary	Progress
Goal 1	Increase number of students who receive academic credit for prior learning.	Ongoing.
Goal 2	Increase number and type of credits awarded.	Ongoing.
Goal 3	Develop transparent policies and practices.	Sample policies included in the ACPL handbook. All institutions submit links to ACPL and military credit policies annually.
Goal 4	Improve prior learning assessment practices.	Training and sharing of practices through ACPL workgroup meetings and workshops.
Goal 5	Create tools to develop faculty and staff expertise and to share exemplary policies and practices.	ACPL handbook updates, listserv, spring 2020 training, and online resources available on the WSAC web page.
Goal 6	Develop articulation agreements when patterns of credit for prior learning are identified for particular programs and pathways.	Select crosswalks available in handbook.
Goal 7	Develop outcome measures to track progress on the goals outlined in this section.	Progress on Goals 1-6 will continue to be monitored through annual ACPL report updates. ACPL Workgroup in 2017 determined that there were too many variables to create statewide numeric outcome goals.*

*For example, institutions with a higher percentage of student veterans might be expected to award higher levels of ACPL. Also, as economic changes occur, institutions may enroll more or fewer older students with previous on-the-job training and experience, which might equate to ACPL credit awarded through assessments of portfolios.

Appendix C

2019 Prior Learning and Military Policy Links Submitted by Institutions

Community and Technical Colleges

Institution	Prior Learning: General Policies	Prior Learning: Military Policies
Bates Technical College	https://batestech.edu/transferring-to-bates/	https://www.batestech.edu/student-resources/veterans-center/
Bellevue College	https://www.bellevuecollege.edu/transfer/awarding-non-traditional-credit/	https://www.bellevuecollege.edu/veterans/academic-credit-for-military-training-and-coursework/
Bellingham Technical College	http://www.btc.edu/FutureStudents/PriorLearning/indexPriorLearning.aspx	http://www.btc.edu/FutureStudents/Veterans/indexVeterans.aspx
Big Bend Community College	https://www.bigbend.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Academic-Credit-for-Prior-Learning-policy.pdf	https://www.bigbend.edu/wp-content/uploads/admissions/Credit-for-Military-Service.pdf
Cascadia College	http://www.cascadia.edu/programs/pla.aspx	http://www.cascadia.edu/enrollment/transfer-credit.aspx
Centralia College	https://www.centralia.edu/about/policies/student.aspx	https://www.centralia.edu/about/policies/student.aspx
Clark College	http://www.clark.edu/enroll/advising-services/credential-evaluation/nontraditional_programs.php	http://www.clark.edu/enroll/advising-services/credential-evaluation/military.php
Clover Park Technical College	http://www.cptc.edu/policies/credit-for-non-traditional-learning	http://www.cptc.edu/policies/veterans-transfer-credit
Columbia Basin College	http://www.columbiabasin.edu/ACPL	https://www.columbiabasin.edu/index.aspx?page=1475
Edmonds Community College	https://www.edcc.edu/credentials/additional-ways-to-earn-credit.html	https://www.edcc.edu/credentials/additional-ways-to-earn-credit.html
Everett Community College	https://www.everettcc.edu/enrollment/transfer/transfer-credit	https://www.everettcc.edu/enrollment/transfer/transfer-credit#Military_credit
Grays Harbor College	https://www.ghc.edu/admissions/credit-prior-learning	https://www.ghc.edu/admissions/credit-prior-learning
Green River College	https://www.greenriver.edu/students/academics/alternative-options-for-earning-credit/	https://www.greenriver.edu/media/content-assets/documents/student-affairs/JST-transcript-evaluation-procedures.pdf

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Institution	Prior Learning: General Policies	Prior Learning: Military Policies
Highline College	https://pla.highline.edu/Policies.for.students.php	http://catalog.highline.edu/content.php?catoid=21&navoid=1490&hl=veterans&returnto=search#veterans-credit
Lake Washington Institute of Technology	https://www.lwtech.edu/admissions/prior-learning/	https://www.lwtech.edu/admissions/veterans-services/military-training/
Lower Columbia College	https://lowercolumbia.edu/publications/catalog-19-20/academic-policies-and-records/index.php	https://lowercolumbia.edu/publications/catalog-19-20/academic-policies-and-records/index.php
North Seattle College	https://northseattle.edu/credentials/credit-prior-learning	https://northseattle.edu/credentials/military-credit
Olympic College	https://www.olympic.edu/programs-classes/transfer-oc/transfer-credits-and-award-credit	https://www.olympic.edu/services/military-and-veteran-programs
Peninsula College	http://pencol.edu/academic-resources/prior-learning-assessment	http://pencol.edu/academic-resources/prior-learning-assessment
Pierce College (Ft Steila & Puyallup)	https://www.pierce.ctc.edu/acpl	https://www.pierce.ctc.edu/acpl
Renton Technical College	https://www.rtc.edu/instructional-strategies	https://www.rtc.edu/veteran-services
Seattle Central College	https://seattlecentral.edu/credit-for-prior-learning	https://seattlecentral.edu/credit-for-prior-learning
Shoreline Community College	https://www.shoreline.edu/about-shoreline/policies-procedures/documents/5164PriorLearningAssessPolicy.pdf	https://www.shoreline.edu/about-shoreline/policies-procedures/documents/5164PriorLearningAssessPolicy.pdf
Skagit Valley College	https://catalog.skagit.edu/content.php?catoid=22&navoid=1621	https://www.skagit.edu/veterans-outreach/
South Puget Sound Community College	https://spsc.edu/start/transfer	https://spsc.edu/start/transfer
South Seattle College	https://www.southseattle.edu/programs/proftech/prior-learning.aspx	http://www.southseattle.edu/veterans/training-credit-policy.aspx
Spokane Community College	https://scc.spokane.edu/Become-a-Student/Prior-Learning-Assessment	https://scc.spokane.edu/Become-a-Student/Prior-Learning-Assessment
Spokane Falls Community College	http://catalog.spokane.edu/PriorLearning.aspx?page=PV1	http://catalog.spokane.edu/PriorLearning.aspx?page=PV5

Institution	Prior Learning: General Policies	Prior Learning: Military Policies
Tacoma Community College	https://www.tacomacc.edu/ attachments/academics-programs/catalog/4-Instruction2019.pdf	https://www.tacomacc.edu/ attachments/academics-programs/catalog/4-Instruction2019.pdf
Walla Walla Community College	www.wbcc.edu/acpl	https://www.wbcc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/academic-credit-military-training-policy.pdf
Wenatchee Valley College	https://www.wvc.edu/students/access/registration/prior-learning-assessment/	https://www.wvc.edu/students/access/registration/prior-learning-assessment/
Whatcom Community College	http://whatcom.edu/academics/learning-options/credit-for-prior-learning	https://www.whatcom.edu/home/showdocument?id=3915
Yakima Valley College	https://www.yvcc.edu/admissions/get-credit-for-what-you-know/	https://yvcc.instructure.com/courses/1142101

Private Baccalaureates

Institution	Prior Learning: General Policies	Prior Learning: Military Policies
Gonzaga University	https://www.gonzaga.edu/undergraduate-admission/apply/how-to-apply/first-year-students	https://www.gonzaga.edu/student-life/student-services/transfer-veteran-returning-adult-services/student-veteran-information#33
Heritage University	http://catalog.heritage.edu/content.php?catid=12&navoid=872	http://catalog.heritage.edu/content.php?catid=12&navoid=872
Pacific Lutheran University	https://www.plu.edu/catalog-2019-2020/undergraduate-program/	https://www.plu.edu/catalog-2019-2020/undergraduate-program/
Saint Martin's University	Please reference our 2016-17 catalog. Military credit page 20. FOCUS program pages 53-54. https://www.stmartin.edu	Please reference our 2016-17 catalog. Military credit page 20. FOCUS program pages 53-54. https://www.stmartin.edu
Seattle Pacific University	http://spu.edu/catalog/undergraduate/20189/academic-policies-procedures/limitations-on-credit ; http://spu.edu/catalog/undergraduate/20189/admissions/transfer-credits	http://spu.edu/catalog/undergraduate/20189/academic-policies-procedures/limitations-on-credit ; http://spu.edu/catalog/undergraduate/20189/admissions/transfer-credits
Seattle University	https://www.seattleu.edu/media/redhawk-service-center/registrar/registrar-policies/TR-cr-not-or-new-accred-instn-79-01.pdf	https://www.seattleu.edu/registrar/academic-policies/
University of Puget Sound	https://www.pugetsound.edu/academics/advising-registrar/transfer-credits	https://www.pugetsound.edu/academics/advising-registrar/veterans-policy/
Walla Walla University	http://bulletin.wallawalla.edu/	http://bulletin.wallawalla.edu/
Whitman College	https://www.whitman.edu/registrar/services-for-students-and-alumni/transfer-credit	https://www.whitman.edu/registrar/services-for-students-and-alumni/transfer-credit
Whitworth University	https://www.whitworth.edu/cms/academics/school-of-continuing-studies/transfer-information/credit-for-prior-learning/	https://www.whitworth.edu/cms/academics/school-of-continuing-studies/transfer-information/credit-for-prior-learning/

Public Baccalaureates

Institution	Prior Learning: General Policies	Prior Learning: Military Policies
Central Washington University	http://catalog.acalog.cwu.edu/content.php?catalogid=51&navoid=2825&hl=%22transfer+credit%22&returnto=search	http://catalog.acalog.cwu.edu/content.php?catalogid=51&navoid=2825&hl=%22transfer+credit%22&returnto=search#cred for mili
Eastern Washington University	www.ewu.edu/itds	www.ewu.edu/itds
The Evergreen State College	http://www.evergreen.edu/admissions/priorlearningassessment	http://www.evergreen.edu/admissions/priorlearningassessment
University of Washington	https://admit.washington.edu/apply/transfer/#creditpolicy	https://admit.washington.edu/apply/transfer/#creditpolicy
Washington State University	https://transfercredit.wsu.edu/types-of-credit/credit-by-exam/	https://transfercredit.wsu.edu/types-of-credit/credit-by-exam/
Western Washington University	https://admissions.wvu.edu/transfer/transfer-credit-policies	https://admissions.wvu.edu/transfer/transfer-credit-policies

About the Washington Student Achievement Council

The Washington Student Achievement Council is committed to increasing educational opportunities and attainment in Washington. The Council has three main functions:

- Lead statewide strategic planning to increase educational attainment.
- Administer programs that help people access and pay for college.
- Advocate for the economic, social, and civic benefits of higher education.

The Council has nine members. Four members represent each of Washington's major education sectors: four-year public baccalaureates, four-year private colleges, public community and technical colleges, and K-12 public schools. Five are citizen members, including one current student.