

# Southeast King County Higher Education Needs Assessment Advisory Committee Meeting

9:00 AM – 11:00 AM | October 6, 2016 | Covington, Washington

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## Welcome & Introductions (9:00-9:15 AM)

Darryl Monear of the Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC) welcomed participants and led a round of introductions for all present Advisory Committee members.

## Meeting Goals (9:15-9:20 AM)

Christina Sedney then updated the group on the goals for the day's session: providing a project status update, presenting preliminary quantitative data; presenting qualitative data from the stakeholder interviews; presenting features and principles that will guide the final recommendations; and confirming upcoming dates and locations of Advisory Committee meetings.

## Project Status Update (9:20-9:30 AM)

Sedney went on to share an update on the project timeline – noting that the general timeline was on track, although data collection and stakeholder interviews have been extended through October due to delays in receiving necessary data and scheduling interviews.

She noted that nearly all the requested data was in hand, and that the team was just waiting on finalized data from Washington's Education Research Data Center (ERDC). She explained to the group that project staff will be working to draft the preliminary report over the coming weeks.

## Preliminary Quantitative Data (9:30 – 10:00 AM)

Dennis Jones began by presenting a map of the region that was included in the analysis of American Community Survey data. The primary study area is the Public Use Microdata Area (PUMA) comprising the cities of Covington, Maple Valley, Black

Diamond, and Enumclaw. He noted that data from surrounding PUMAs were analyzed as well for comparison purposes.

He then presented a map of the school districts whose data is included in the analysis: Auburn, Enumclaw, Federal Way, Highline, Kent, Renton, Tahoma, Sumner, and White River. Jones explained that no one school district aligns with the PUMA—rather several overlap the PUMA and others are adjacent—therefore data from each of these school districts was analyzed to provide a more complete picture of the postsecondary attendance patterns of southeast King County's students.

Jones noted that for the most part, students in the region participate in higher education at about the same rate as the statewide average of 61 percent – and several of the area's large school districts have a higher participation rate. He suggested that there is not a lot of evidence that students who graduate from high school in southeast King County do not have a place to go to pursue higher education opportunities.

From the Auburn school district in 2014, the primary destination of graduating high school students was Green River Community College (41.7 percent), followed by the University of Washington (17.5 percent), Washington State University (7.5 percent), Central Washington University (6.7 percent), and Highline Community College (6.7 percent). Cumulatively, 80 percent of Auburn's graduating seniors in 2014 enrolled at one of these five institutions.

In Enumclaw, most students go on to Green River and Central Washington University enrolls the next highest percentage of the district's students. In Federal Way, Highline Community College is the primary destination for graduates, followed by the University of Washington. In Highline, Highline Community College is the primary destination, with the University of Washington enrolling the second highest percentage of students. In Renton school district, Bellevue Community College is the top destination of students, followed by the University of Washington, then Renton Technical College. This is the only

school district in the area in which Renton Technical College shows up as a top five recipient of area students. This is likely due to the fact that Renton Technical College, despite its proximity to many area students, offers programs that are more specialized in nature.

Washington's higher education system is designed so that a significant share of students begin higher education at two-year institutions and these data reflect that to a certain degree. The project team has not yet had the opportunity to analyze transfer data between higher education institutions in the area, and this will be an important additional piece of the puzzle.

The bottom line is that there is not a huge need in the area for services for traditional-aged students (those coming directly from high school). The need is more about how to complete degrees, so data are pointing to adults and degree completion as the primary areas of need in southeast King County.

Jones also examined Burning Glass data—which draws from real-time online job postings for a given geographic area and the educational requirements these posting contain. This data can be used to observe workforce supply and demand. At the sub-baccalaureate level, the primary finding is that there is a demonstrated need in nursing – meaning that there is an undersupply of nurses at the sub-baccalaureate level relative to area employers' demand.

Meanwhile, demand for non-nursing jobs in the healthcare sector—for example, imaging technicians—is lower, and current demand seems to be well met by the area's existing workforce. Jones added that this finding was reinforced by our conversations with area healthcare employers.

Cody Eccles mentioned that healthcare industry providers seeking “Magnet” recognition<sup>1</sup> must pursue a nursing workforce where 80 percent hold Bachelors of Science in Nursing (BSNs) rather than Associate Degrees in Nursing (ADNs). Rebecca Williamson added that the state's licensure board has indicated they are not approving any more ADN programs. Jones replied that future demand is likely to be for BSN completion programs.

At the baccalaureate level, the primary finding is that low-paying hospitality, food and tourism jobs are undersupplied. Meanwhile, bachelor's level nursing positions are not currently in demand in southeast King County. Jones indicated that when the new MultiCare hospital opens, there are likely to be relocations of nurses who currently work at other hospitals and live in the Covington area.

Jones cautioned that the Burning Glass data does not reflect demand for teachers, because teacher job postings are not reflected in the online job postings analyzed by Burning Glass, so we will need to rely on stakeholder interviews to assess this demand.

#### **Qualitative Data (10:00 – 10:20 AM)**

Demi Michelau then discussed the current status of the qualitative data for the project. She reminded the group of the interviews that were conducted in September and gave an update on the interviews that the project team had conducted in October. She noted that there are a few outstanding interviews to be scheduled with some key stakeholders, including hiring folks from the local school districts, Valley Medical Center, and some other local employers if time allows.

She noted that the strongest theme so far across the board has been traffic and its effect on local mobility – adding that it has become clear that distance on a map

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<sup>1</sup> According to the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC), Magnet Recognition is “an organizational credential awarded to exceptional health care organizations that meet ANCC standards for quality patient care, nursing excellence, and innovations in professional nursing practice.” The program now requires that applicants document progress towards achieving a nursing staff where 80 percent or higher hold BSNs. There are currently three hospitals in the state of Washington with this designation, and none in southeast King County.

often does not reflect travel times in the region.

Another prominent theme from the interviews was a sense of unmet workforce needs in the area, with interview subjects citing fields such as nursing, teaching, and IT. She mentioned that the data supports the narrative that there is unmet need in terms of nursing and teaching, but does not bear out the supposition that there is unmet workforce need in the IT field.

Jones interjected that there is likely an individual demand for IT—that is individuals would like to have careers in IT due to the high pay—however, that does not equate to local employer demand for IT professionals. He added that while there are likely some IT positions available locally on a small scale there does not appear to be large-scale demand for IT professionals in the area.

Michelau continued on to the third major theme from the interviews, that there are some disconnects to varying degrees among sectors in the area – including between higher education, K-12, communities and employers. She explained that the default thinking as to the educational need in the area centered on traditional-aged students – when in fact the data suggests that it is much more likely to be coming from older students looking to complete degrees or earn new credentials.

Michelau went on to share that there is a clear desire for area residents to earn a living wage – working in the community in which they live and earning enough to do so comfortably. As a final theme, she noted that postsecondary providers will require demonstration of demand for their offerings before coming to operate in the area. At which point Jones suggested that this could look like a cohort model – particularly given that there might not be enough area workforce demand for a provider to offer a program continuously.

Jean Floten asked what the numbers say about what percentage of the local population is adults with some college credit and no degree. Michelau responded that

among working age adults in the area, about 28 percent fall into the “some college, no degree” category.

Michelau then went on to discuss what she termed “undercurrents” from the stakeholder interviews, explaining that some ideas subtly came up during the interview process that were not necessarily explicitly stated or shared by a majority of the interview subjects – but were important to note and consider. First, she shared that there was a marked lack of familiarity with what distance education is, leading to some skepticism on the part of certain interviewees.

She also mentioned that a feeling of competition among local higher education providers appeared to exist – though noting that this was likely due to the structure of the state's higher education system. Michelau then discussed economic development as a driver of the desire to develop a higher education location in the area, noting this undercurrent was particularly strong amongst legislators.

Jones added that the industries that have the potential to be drivers of economic development in the area are healthcare and retail. He went on to explain that between these two – healthcare will be the industry that creates demand for high paying, high education jobs that require higher education. Moreover, it will not just be hospitals themselves that incite this demand but also other health-related employers such as long-term care facilities that serve an aging population. He added to the extent that there are any IT needs these will be small and one-off in nature. Regan Bolli agreed with this assessment of the area's industries.

Michelau asked the group if these themes and undercurrents rang true. Deb Casey replied that she was curious to know if the growing diversity of the area had come up at all as a theme. Jones answered that while we looked at demographics from a data perspective, this did not come up as a theme in interviews with the notable exception of the school districts.

Jean Floten asked if economic development planning is focused on immediate needs or if it is focused on more long-term planning needs. Bolli replied that planning is focused on healthcare and retail over the next ten years, noting that Covington is planning to double the amount of available retail space. Michelau added that legislators appear to have goals in terms of developing a local IT industry, but that there isn't necessarily a clear need. Bolli asked how legislators tied economic development to the question of a higher education presence in southeast King County.

Michelau responded that Senator Fain said higher home prices are pushing people out of Seattle and they want people in southeast King County to be able to still afford to live in the area as this new group comes into the area at a growing rate. Jones added that people need to afford to stay put in order to avoid being pushed out. Further, he noted that national data on students with some college, no degree and their income levels shows that most are not doing well economically – commonly earning around \$30,000 per year or less – and that people in this educational category very rarely progress to higher levels over time. This statistic holds true regardless of age (even those in their fifties with some college, no degree tend to be in low income brackets).

Jones also noted that as a result of the 2008 recession, those individuals with only a high school degree are increasingly struggling to find well-paying employment. Since the recession the market has lost about 5.6 million jobs requiring only a high school diploma, jobs requiring an associate's degree have dropped by about a million, and that only those jobs requiring a baccalaureate degree or higher have grown since 2008 – adding between 4 and 5 million jobs nationally. Therefore the importance of education in this tumultuous economy is highly evident.

### **Principles and Features Guiding the Final Recommendations (10:20 – 10:45 AM)**

Michelau then moved on to the principles and features guiding the final recommendations. She first outlined the principles that the project team believes will guide their final recommendations. These principles are: demand is for the provision of service, not a new institution; local response needs to be driven by local demand, not

institutional supply; the proposed solution must be able to respond to changing workforce demands; and lastly that travel considerations make local access important.

Jones added that the travel time consideration is particularly important because we are likely talking about adult students and the times they would go to school are the times traffic is the worst – for example after work.

Michelau then shared the features that the project team believes a solution should have. These are: any solution selected should be flexible in nature, and distance/hybrid options should be considered; it should be set up to serve adult students; it should not be limited to a single provider as no one provider is likely to offer all the desired programs; however, there should be only one provider per program; finally, the solution must incorporate robust student support services.

Cathy Calvert commented that these features are very similar to the Muckleshoot Tribal College model, noting that they serve adults with evening classes offered by multiple providers. Moreover, they often use a cohort-based approach, for example through the teacher preparation program they formerly offered. She added that they assess community needs and then build programs to support the identified needs, as the project team is suggesting for the southeast King County higher education solution.

Jones agreed that demand for programs is likely to be episodic – that is some programs might be offered at all times but for others there will only be cohort-based demand requiring them to be offered on more of a four to five year timeline. He noted that the question is how do you come and go in a market. He also noted that MultiCare in particular seems very willing to partner.

Paul Pitre then asked for clarification on the principle “local demand versus institutional supply” to which Jones replied that any solution should be built in response to local workforce needs and economic demand and not simply offer programs institutions had available. Sedney then asked Pitre to share a bit about his experience with the Everett center in this regard.

Pitre responded that he leads the Everett Center and that there were initially concerns about sustainability, which is why Western Washington was asked to come in. The community was adamant about solidifying state support and that enabled long-term support. Western provides both the longest running and largest set of course offerings, and now Washington State University is moving in with some STEM-related programs. They are also looking into some Hospitality and Business Management programs. Interestingly, WSU North Puget Sound in Everett has had the highest percentage increase in terms of enrollments in the WSU system. It's clear that there was pent-up regional demand.

Pitre added that he had spoken with Covington a few years ago, and was curious about projections of growth in the next few years. He asked the team if they have looked at what will happen in the next 10 to 20 years in terms of population growth. Jones replied that unfortunately most projections are at the county level and can't be broken down to the sub-county level.

Michelau asked Pitre how they decided which programs to offer. He replied that it was related to community demand and tied to economic development within the region – they have a clear focus of where they want to grow. Their initial strategic plan looks at data compared to job growth – which they were asked to do by the legislature. They looked at Bureau of Labor Statistics data and job growth.

Regan Bolli asked if Boeing was influential in terms of generating demand. Pitre replied that there was regional demand for engineering. Earl Gibbons added that Everett is historically a manufacturing city and its workforce needs are now becoming increasingly high tech. Boeing is important, but, political leaders in the area perceive that the only way to keep employers is to “feed them things they can't find elsewhere” this has driven the polytechnic focus of the center.

Jones noted that Boeing hires nationally for engineers, but once they are in the area, the path to keeping them up to date is local. Top talent can come from anywhere, but, the way that policymakers look at it – there is not a sufficient supply of engineers (with

specific expertise) to meet local demand – and they want to increase the share of engineers from Washington. Pitre replied that the issue is retaining rather than recruiting.

Jones clarified that in this conversation we are talking about people who already have a baccalaureate degree. Michelau asked Pitre what the age break down was of Everett students and Pitre replied that it is approximately 52 percent in the 18-24 age range and 47-48 percent in the 25 and above age range. However, he noted that because the center operates a two plus two model this drives down the average age from what you'd expect – if they didn't they would expect that percentage breakdown to skew much more strongly towards the older group. Essentially the focus on engineering has drawn down the average age. He added that the student population has jumped from 27 percent students of color to 36 percent. Moreover this dramatic shift did not coincide with a concerted recruitment effort, but occurred organically.

Michael Wark shared that the area is high in terms of the number of bachelor's degrees but that a lot of these are imported and that we need to ensure that our population is educated. Jean Floten noted that WGU serves the area already and offers a number of programs discussed – as can be seen in the data they shared.

Deb Casey asked if the team had looked at debt to income ratios for programs in the area and Jones replied that the real issue is dropouts – those who complete a degree tend to be fine regardless of this ratio. He added that this is why support services are so critical. Jones explained that he has seen it work where community colleges provide support services all the way through two plus two programs, because continuity around support services is critical. He added that WGU has a solid model for this with their system of “coaches.” The Committee discussed where student debt information might be available, with suggestions including the Student Achievement Council's student financial assistance department. Casey noted students in non-high wage programs are critical – asking how they meet their loan payments with lower paying jobs.

Jones asked the group to consider how support services would be paid for, noting that he has seen successful models where communities and states collaborate to pay for infrastructure.

Pitre noted that Everett Community College's campus initially took on leadership in this respect. They had a building under way, and they had a strategic plan whereby they presented three alternatives for the Everett center: a downtown location, onsite at the campus, or incorporated into an expanded existing facility. They ultimately opted to expand an existing facility, increasing capacity by about 25 percent. This was at heart an Everett Community College endeavor. When WSU did come in, they contributed a percentage for maintenance dollars. Now they have a new building being constructed on the Everett Community College campus, which the state funded for WSU. They are expected to receive maintenance and operating dollars from the state for this facility, but are not sure how much these will be.

At Everett, student support services are provided by individual programs. The evolving WSU/Everett model is different from many others, where community colleges provide all the student services infrastructure, typically through some sort of memorandum with the four year. Four years generally will not "project" an office (such as disability services) to an additional location, but are more likely to use local resources. They will use the home campus office as a coordinator, but on-the-ground services are all provided by the host.

Floten remarked that the governor recently funded a study on mental health care needs. She suggested that the state may be investing in mental health professionals – and that it might be smart to invest in areas with state money behind them. For example, she has heard talk about hiring mental health staff with bachelor's degrees in instead of the more traditional Master's in Social Work qualification. She added that this was financed by the Workforce Development Board.

Sedney asked if the Green River representatives could comment on what they'd heard from the college's branch campus dean regarding difficulties in finding faculty to staff their branch campus locations. Rebecca Williamson noted that there wouldn't be an

issue with faculty from Green River's perspective so long as there was a cohort of students for them to teach.

Jones noted that population density is just different between southeast King County and north Puget Sound. He went on to explain that local staff is best positioned to create cohorts. He mentioned that there is a university center in rural Oklahoma where the local entity is in charge of student recruitment since the providers coming in externally are those *least* equipped to develop cohorts. Calvert agreed – noting that this is how the tribal college operates – they create the cohorts based on demand within their community – then build programs to meet the need.

Jones concluded by noting that the key issues will be how and through what mechanism this is all paid for.

Floten replied that the ideal solution is online, but if the desire is to have a local model a hybrid option makes the most sense. She suggested that out-of-the box thinking will be critical given that this may be hard to sustain in the long term. Michelau asked if WGU offers any hybrid options and Floten replied that it does not yet, although WGU is doing some experimenting with this at certain local community colleges.

Wark added that UW Tacoma is at the table because Federal Way is interested in bringing in a university presence. He further noted that Federal Way's motivation is economic development and not student demand (their city council requested a study from consulting firm MGT America) and since there are about 350 UW staff in south King County, staffing such a center should be easy. Meanwhile, there is no physical college campus in Pierce in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Legislative district and Pierce College is looking at what kind of facility might make sense for them. They have brought together five or six superintendents to discuss this – and are ramping up College in the High School and College Promise at UW Tacoma. They are also looking at four-year options.

#### **Next Steps (10:45 AM – 11:00 AM)**

Sedney then provided an overview of the next steps for the project over the course of October: final data analysis, final stakeholder interviews – likely by phone, and drafting

of the preliminary report. She also noted that they would be presenting findings at the November 9 meeting of the Washington Student Achievement Council. The group agreed that the next Advisory Committee meeting would take place on October 26 at the Muckleshoot Tribal College and that the final meeting would take place on November 18 at the City of Covington City Council Chambers.

She reminded attendees that the project website houses information on the project's authorizing legislation, timeline, meeting notes and materials, and upcoming dates and deadlines – sharing that it can be accessed at: <http://www.wsac.wa.gov/higher-education-needs-assessment>.

#### **Adjournment (11:00 AM)**

As there was no other business to discuss, the meeting adjourned at 11:00 AM.