

Archived Information

# ACCOUNTABILITY FOR BETTER RESULTS

A National Imperative for Higher Education



National Commission on Accountability  
in Higher Education

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State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO) is a nonprofit, nationwide association of the chief executive officers serving statewide coordinating and governing boards for postsecondary education. The mission of SHEEO is to assist its members and the states in developing and sustaining excellent systems of higher education. SHEEO pursues its mission by: organizing regular professional development meetings for its members and their senior staff; maintaining regular systems of communication among the professional staffs of member agencies; serving as a liaison between the states and the federal government; studying higher education policy issues and state activities and publishing reports to inform the field; and implementing projects to enhance the capacity of the states and SHEEO agencies to improve higher education.

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March 10, 2005

**SHEEO**

A PROJECT OF THE STATE HIGHER EDUCATION EXECUTIVE OFFICERS  
WITH SUPPORT FROM THE FORD FOUNDATION

## About the Commission

The National Commission on Accountability in Higher Education is co-chaired by former Governor Frank Keating of Oklahoma, and former Secretary of Education and former Governor of South Carolina, Richard W. Riley.

The thirteen members of the commission have deep experience in higher education policy and include governors, legislators, educators, and private sector leaders from every region of the country.

A distinguished panel of researchers and policy experts advised the Commission. Brief biographical sketches of the members of the Commission and its panel of advisors appear in *Appendix B* and *Appendix C*.

The Commission was organized by SHEEO (the national association of chief executives of statewide boards for higher education) to consider and recommend ways of improving accountability and performance in higher education.

The SHEEO staff supported the work of the Commission, drafted its report, and designed the publication.

# Table Of Contents

	Page
Statement of Transmittal from the Commission .....	4
Why We Must Act .....	6
Executive Overview .....	6
The National Agenda for Higher Education .....	9
The Role of Accountability .....	11
Agree on Fundamental Priorities .....	12
Establish and Honor a Division of Labor .....	13
Focus on a Few Explicit Goals .....	13
Measure Results and Work for Improvement .....	15
Who is Responsible for What? .....	16
Business and Civic Leaders .....	16
Governors, Legislators, State Boards and Executives for Higher Education .....	16
The Federal Government .....	18
Institutions .....	21
Accrediting Associations .....	21
Faculty and Students .....	22
Improving Instruction, Research, and Productivity .....	23
Instruction .....	23
Preparation .....	23
Clear Goals, Rigorous Assessment – Better Instruction .....	24
Closing Performance Gaps .....	26
Research – Discovering and Applying Knowledge .....	28
Productivity .....	29
Improving Cost-effectiveness .....	29
Budgeting for Improved Performance .....	30
Conclusion .....	32
Appendix A - Higher Education in the United States .....	33
Appendix B - Members of the National Commission on Accountability in Higher Education .....	35
Appendix C - Commission's Panel of Advisors .....	37
Endnotes .....	38

# Accountability for Better Results – A National Imperative for Higher Education

Report of the National Commission on Accountability in Higher Education

## Statement of Transmittal from the Commission

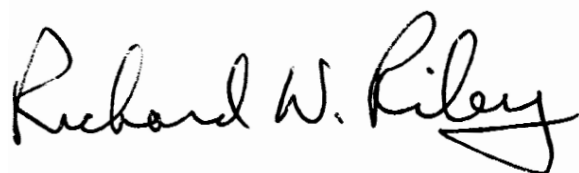
In the twentieth century, the U.S. set a world standard for instruction, research, and service in higher education, but those achievements are no longer good enough. America's needs are growing and other nations are approaching or surpassing our performance.

The National Commission on Accountability in Higher Education believes improved accountability for better results is imperative, but how to improve accountability in higher education is not so obvious. This report conveys our analysis of the situation and our recommendations for improvement.

We urge our colleagues in education and government to implement these recommendations to ensure higher education in the U.S. continues to advance the well-being and prosperity of future generations.



**The Honorable Frank Keating**  
President, American Council of Life Insurers  
Former Governor of Oklahoma



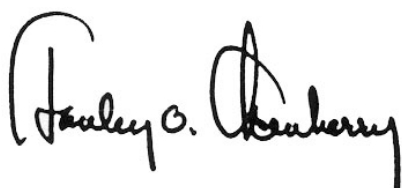
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Former Kansas Senate Majority Leader

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President, University of Southern Maine

**Martha Romero**  
Senior Scholar, Claremont Graduate University  
Former President, Siskiyou Joint Community College

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President & CEO, Nellie Mae Education Foundation  
Former Executive Director, Colorado Commission on  
Higher Education

# Accountability for Better Results – A National Imperative for Higher Education

Report of the National Commission on Accountability in Higher Education

## Why We Must Act

- For over fifty years, speaker after speaker – university presidents, business leaders, Presidents of the United States – have praised our system of higher education as the finest in the world. But even as we bask in the afterglow of past achievements a starker reality is emerging on the horizon. For the first time in decades the United States no longer leads the developed world in the rate of college completion. In addition, large developing economies, especially China and India, are successfully educating thousands of scientists and engineers in order to compete in the global economy.
- Four out of ten students in colleges and universities fail to graduate within six years; one of those four is still enrolled.
- One-fourth of low-income students in the top quartile of academic ability and preparation fail to enroll in college within two years of high school graduation. While more minorities and low-income students are enrolling, the "majority" of minority students do not graduate.
- Both the price students pay and higher education costs have grown persistently faster than the consumer price index. State support and federal programs like Pell Grants are increasingly falling behind enrollment demand and inflation.
- A large percentage of our workforce in science and technology comes from highly motivated and able international students. Other nations are competing more successfully for scientific talent; we cannot rely on imported talent to meet future needs.

For over fifty years, the United States could rightfully claim to have the finest system of higher education in the world in terms of access, graduates, and research. Today, this basic assumption is under challenge.

At its best our system of higher education continues to set a standard for excellence and research that remains the envy of the world. But the foundations of our system of higher education are too weak to sustain our economy and quality of life.

In the 21st century we must do more than just provide the finest education possible to a select few – we must provide all Americans with the skills they need to succeed in the global economy and lead satisfying, productive lives. Our people and our nation will be poorer and weaker if we fail to provide real opportunities for all Americans to fulfill their potential and succeed in higher education.

Put simply – increasing the number of citizens graduating from our nation's colleges and universities is a vital national interest.

## Executive Overview

The National Commission believes we must regain the initiative by holding ourselves to the highest standards of accountability for student success, research and service, and greater productivity in higher education.

Accountability for better results is imperative, but more accountability of the kinds generally practiced will not help improve performance. Our current system of accountability can best be described as cumbersome, over-designed, confusing, and inefficient. It fails to answer key questions, it overburdens policymakers with excessive, misleading data, and it overburdens institutions by requiring them to report it.

We need a fresh approach to accountability, an approach that yields better results. We need accountability to focus attention on state and national priorities and challenge both policymakers and educators to shoulder their share of



the responsibility for achieving them. We need accountability to give us dependable, valid information to monitor results, target problems, and mobilize the will, resources, and creativity to improve performance.

A better system of accountability will rely on pride, rather than fear, aspirations rather than minimum standards as its organizing principles. It will not be an instrument for diverting, or shifting blame. It will be collaborative, because responsibility is shared. It will be rigorous, because we can't afford to have low aspirations or soft standards.

A better system of accountability will be serious about improving performance, while respecting legitimate boundaries between federal, state, and institutional roles, and between policy and educational administration. Accountability must respect the vibrancy of our competitive, diversified, decentralized system of higher education, and create the conditions for each and every institution of higher learning to be recognized for excellence in its particular mission.

A better system of accountability will put more emphasis on successful student learning and high quality research. A better system will decrease the role of superficial comparisons and rankings, which needlessly increase costs and encourage some institutions to reduce academic standards and others to exclude those students who require extra time or assistance to succeed.

A better system of accountability will provide parents, students, concerned citizens and policymakers the answers to reasonable questions regarding costs, the availability of required courses, what students are learning, and graduation rates.

Real improvement will only come through a sustained effort including reform of our nation's high schools, better pathways to college for non-traditional students, more financial aid, a greater focus on student retention and success, and improved institutional practices. Real improvement in higher education will come when accountability in higher education is *a democratic process through which shared goals are explicitly established, progress is measured, and work to improve performance is motivated and guided*. It will include: agreement on fundamental priorities, an effective, practical division of labor, focus on a few critical goals at every level of responsibility, and rigorous measurement and public reporting of results, followed by collaborative work to improve.

Toward these ends, the National Commission recommends an ongoing and vigorous dialogue among business and civic leaders, public officials, and educators targeted on meeting the educational needs of the American people. Business and civic leaders must play key, foundational roles in communicating expectations and changing needs to educators and policymakers, challenging them to do what is required, and building the public support necessary for them to succeed. For others with key roles the Commission recommends:

## **Governors, Legislators, State Boards and Executives for Higher Education**

- Create statewide data systems across all levels of education to help inform policy and budgetary decisions that will close achievement gaps and promote greater equity in allocating resources;
- Make the critical transition from high school to college a focus of accountability: colleges must help shape K-12 standards; college placement exams should be offered to high school juniors; and dual or concurrent early college programs should be encouraged;
- Recognize that significant investments and improvements in teaching at every level must be a higher priority in order to improve college preparation and student success;
- Establish goals based on broad state needs and priorities (in areas such as student participation and retention, student achievement, workforce needs, economic development, and research productivity);
- Monitor statewide and regional results, and focus policy and resources on public priorities while reducing detailed controls on institutional operations;
- Assess the learning of college-educated students statewide through professional certification and graduate school admissions exams, and other assessments administered to a sample of students;
- Coordinate state appropriations, tuition, and student assistance policies to provide adequate financial support for institutional operations and ensure higher education is affordable to low and moderate-income students; and
- Work with institutions to improve productivity by emphasizing priorities and achieving more efficient operations.

## The Federal Government

- Sustain and increase support for financial aid to low-income students, programs to close the gaps in educational opportunities, and research;
- Establish a national student unit record data system with fail-safe privacy safeguards – the current system is outmoded and inadequate for assessing actual costs and student progress through higher education;
- Expand sample sizes and administer the National Assessment of Adult Literacy (NAAL) every five years to provide statistically-valid information on the capacities of each state's workforce, including college educated adults;
- Enhance the quality of information on higher education provided to prospective students by upgrading the current COOL website at the Department of Education; and
- Continue to move aggressively to close down diploma and accreditation mills.

## Institutional Trustees and Leaders

- Establish institutional goals aligned with fundamental public priorities;
- Create the conditions, including necessary incentives and management oversight, for students and faculty to meet ambitious objectives in learning, research, and service;
- Monitor progress on specific institutional goals aligned with fundamental public priorities;
- Establish and communicate clearly to students explicit learning goals for each academic program as well as learning goals for general education;
- Employ internal and external assessments of learning and publicly communicate the results in order to monitor and improve performance;
- Employ rigorous, broadly conceived standards for institutionally-supported research and service; and
- Re-assess institutional priorities continuously and implement strategies to increase productivity and cost-effectiveness.

## Accrediting Associations

- Establish learning goals appropriate to different degrees and certificates;
- Assess institutional performance and capacity against established standards; and
- Expand and enhance publicly available information on the findings of accrediting reviews.

## Faculty and Students

- Become deeply and persistently engaged in establishing public and institutional priorities and giving advice and feedback to policymakers and institutional leaders; and
- Exert the effort and commitment required to achieve personal and national goals for higher education.

**In conclusion**, the urgent and growing needs of the American people for excellent higher education require a fresh approach to accountability. Our recommendations honor the different roles and responsibilities within our system, while challenging educators and public leaders to become more focused on fundamental priorities, more disciplined in assessing performance, and more deeply committed to excellence and meeting national needs. Accountability systems with visible goals, commitment, and progress will build confidence, sustain improvement, and extend to future generations the benefits of a great American system of higher education.

# The National Agenda for Higher Education

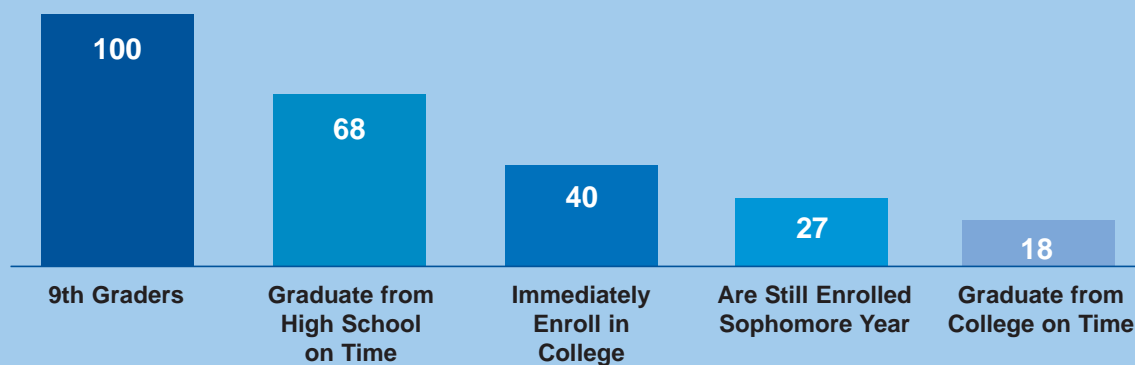
The United States system of higher education led the world in the 20th century by creating wide access to opportunity and a network of exceptional colleges and universities. But these achievements are no longer good enough.

The *status quo* in higher education is unacceptable because: 1) a high school diploma is no longer adequate for work in a competitive economy, supporting a family, or meeting the full responsibilities of citizenship; 2) other countries are beginning to attain and surpass our educational achievements;<sup>1</sup> and 3) the fastest growing segments of our population – minorities and low-income students – have been the least successful in our educational system. We must improve performance. To sustain the health of our society and to meet their hopes and aspirations for a satisfying life, the American people must be among the best educated in the world.

The American people understand what they need. Virtually all high school students aspire to some postsecondary credential; eighty percent say they will "probably or definitely" obtain at least a baccalaureate degree, and two-thirds of high school graduates enroll immediately in postsecondary education.<sup>2</sup> Business leaders assert the knowledge and skill of our workforce will determine our economic future. To meet these aspirations, nearly every citizen of the United States must be successful in some form of postsecondary education. But as shown below, only 68 percent of ninth graders graduate from high school in four years and only 18 percent achieve a degree within six years after enrolling in college.

## Our Leaky Educational Pipeline

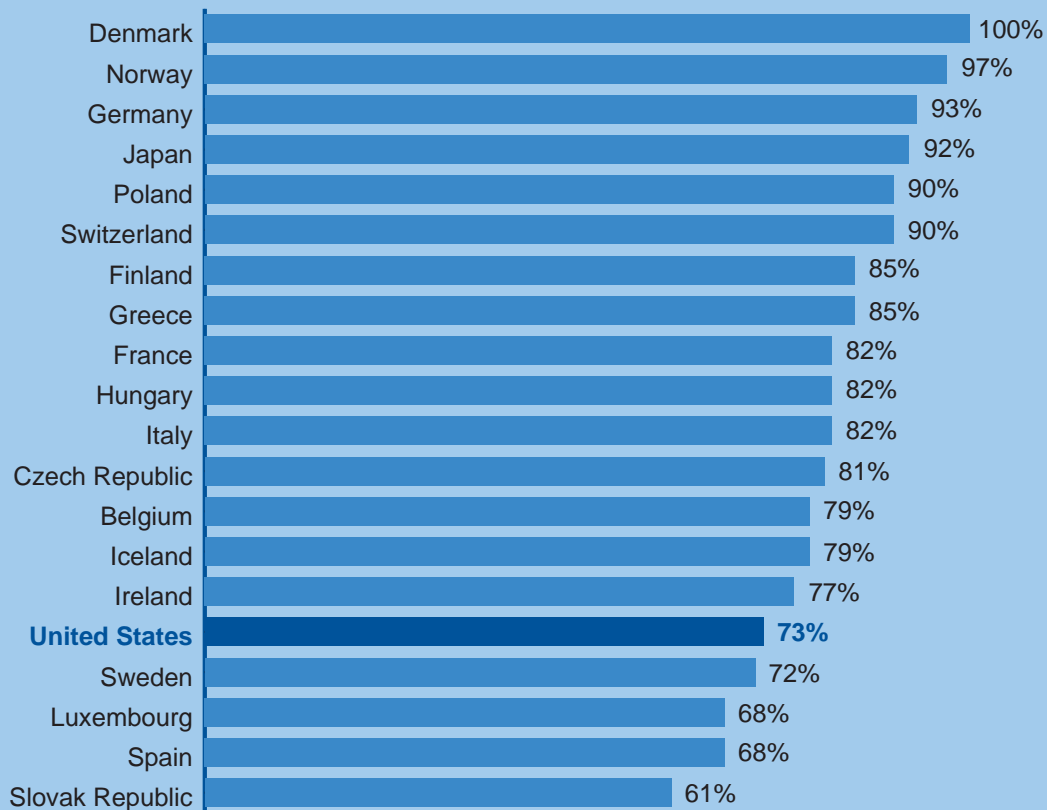
For every . . .



Source: National Center for Higher Education Management Systems, 2002. Data are estimates of pipeline progress rather than actual cohort. For more information, visit [higheredinfo.org](http://higheredinfo.org).

We also must guard against complacency in research and service. The nation depends on college and university faculty to discover new knowledge, apply it to practical problems, and enhance community and cultural life through scholarship and service. The supply of future talent is in question, however, especially in science and technology. Among U.S. degree holders in science and technology, foreign-born individuals account for 17 percent of bachelors degrees, 29 percent of masters degrees, and 38 percent of doctoral degrees. The migration of students to the United States for training in science and technology has been good for us and for the world, but we can no longer rely on imported brainpower. Other nations are competing vigorously for scientific talent in an increasingly mobile global economy.<sup>3</sup>

## High School Graduation Rate by Country



Source: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, *Learning for Tomorrow's World: First Results from PISA 2003, 2004.*

Finally, resources are limited. Increased productivity and cost-effectiveness is essential in meeting these goals for learning, research, and service.

*These imperatives – improving student attainment, sustaining and enhancing the quality of research and service, and increasing productivity – constitute the national agenda for higher education.*

The nation has not fully come to grips with the fundamental changes required to realize this agenda for higher education. Educators and policymakers must recognize and accept their individual responsibility to confront performance gaps, reorder priorities, change policies, and undertake long-term initiatives to achieve America's goals.

# The Role of Accountability

Better accountability for results is required to realize the national agenda for higher education. But accountability is not a new idea. Accountability initiatives grew after Sputnik in 1957 and proliferated after *A Nation at Risk* in 1983.<sup>4</sup> Despite great effort, progress has been slow, and the needs are growing.

The problem is not the absence of accountability or the amount of accountability. Our colleges and universities are accountable to the student market, to trustees, to private financial supporters, to accreditors, and to the states and federal government. The problem is a failure to develop and implement accountability approaches that help improve performance in a complex, decentralized system of higher education.

Too often accountability is a battleground between educators and policymakers. Many educators believe externally imposed accountability is a tool to place blame or avoid responsibility for inadequate financial support. Many policymakers, frustrated because existing investments are not producing better results, believe stronger external accountability is the only way to get improvement. In an atmosphere of resentment and mistrust, accountability initiatives produce more resistance than progress.

## Accountability Fails to Do Its Job

- **When "accountability" is no more than reference-sized books of information**
- **When faculty consider accountability "administrative work"**
- **When more time is spent debating how performance will be measured and rewarded than how performance can be improved**
- **When nobody can remember all the priority goals**
- **When policymakers do not sustain financial support for improvement plans**
- **When it feels like coercion or bribery**

People achieve excellence because they want to, not because they have to. A shared drive to succeed with an acceptance of reciprocal responsibilities is the most constructive foundation for improving results. Productive accountability is a social contract whose force and meaning is based more on internalized commitments and aspirations than formal obligations or superior-subordinate relationships.<sup>5</sup>

Accountability for better results is different from accountability for minimum standards. The organizing principle for accountability must be pride, not fear.

To achieve better results, accountability in higher education must be *a democratic process through which shared goals are explicitly established, progress is measured, and work to improve performance is motivated and guided.*

Such accountability requires both vigorous dialogue and close working relationships. Educators must pay attention to standards, measure outcomes, and work for improvement. Policymakers must invest in public priorities,

implement policies designed to achieve better results, monitor results, and improve policies as needed. Together, and in their particular roles and responsibilities, they must:

- Agree on fundamental priorities, a shared vision, as a framework for public policies and institutional goals;
- Establish and honor a division of labor based on the different responsibilities and capacities of students, faculty, policymakers, civic leaders, trustees, and institutional leaders;
- Focus on a manageable number of explicit goals in order to concentrate effort and achieve priority objectives at every level of responsibility; and
- Measure results rigorously, and then work for improvement.

## Agree on Fundamental Priorities

In higher education policy dialogues “public priorities” and “institutional priorities” often seem different, even conflicting. While the conflict is superficial, it has serious consequences. It must be confronted and resolved.

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Public priorities include: improving access, graduation rates, and learning; increasing efficiency; closing achievement gaps; generating beneficial research; improving the quality of life in communities; and producing graduates able to meet critical workforce needs. Underlying all these issues is the deep public interest in a higher education system in which scholars and students can freely advance knowledge and transmit it to future generations.

Although intrinsically grounded in such public priorities, institutional priorities are commonly expressed in terms of competition with *other* institutions. Institutions compete to obtain resources and prestige, recruit students and faculty, and “upgrade” their mission. Institutions, especially those without an explicit public affiliation, may feel less accountable to public priorities than to their students, constituents, and heritage.

These *are* different perspectives, but the difference between them is overdrawn. All U.S. colleges and universities are dedicated to public priorities. Their contributions to the public justify tax exemptions for non-profit institutions and public support of student financial assistance, research, and direct institutional aid.

Unfortunately, however, fundamental public priorities recede to the background when institutions compete for status on national rankings based on student selectivity, faculty prestige, and similar measures. Pursuing higher rankings on such measures has degraded cost-effectiveness and detracted attention from authentic goals. To achieve excellent results, the focus of accountability, both in public policy and within institutions, must be on learning, widespread student achievement, and high quality research and service.

State and national leaders are responsible for articulating public priorities for higher education and investing political capital to achieve them. College and university leaders must participate in articulating public priorities and make them visible institutional priorities. Every institution – regardless of its independent or public status, the selectivity of its student body, or its emphasis on research – plays an important role in meeting broad public priorities. The pursuit of institutional excellence and widespread educational achievement are complementary, not contradictory goals.

A common vision for higher education, expressed as explicit public priorities, is the only solid foundation for an effective accountability system. Several states have successfully convened regular meetings of business, civic, political, and educational leaders to focus on public priorities, define them in appropriate detail, and build a consensus on achieving them. While it can be difficult to sustain participation in such dialogues on higher education policy, they should become a permanent feature of civic life in the states.

## Establish and Honor a Division of Labor

The past success of American higher education has been achieved through a public commitment to widespread opportunity and a well-diversified system of responsive, functionally independent institutions. (*Appendix A*) Implicitly, this system has employed a clear division of labor based on distinctive, but interrelated capabilities and responsibilities:

- State and federal policymakers, within their respective domains, are responsible for identifying broad public priorities and responding with needed changes in policy, public programs, and budget allocations;
- Institutional trustees and leaders are responsible for governance and management, creating the conditions to enable and motivate faculty and students to excel; and
- Faculty and students are responsible for teaching, learning, research, and service.

We will not achieve better results by overwhelming this traditional division of labor with an overarching accountability system. A distribution of responsibility is essential for all complex work; top-down policies become bureaucratic and lose traction when they become too fine-grained.<sup>6</sup> Instead, better accountability mechanisms must be developed by, and embedded within every domain of responsibility, from public policy to teaching and learning.

A distributed, decentralized approach to accountability will reinforce a sense of obligation and empowerment to take action for improvement, moving policymakers, institutional leaders, faculty, and students to focus on goals within their particular responsibilities and capacities. Personal involvement in accountability leads to the "buy in" required for improvement.

Honoring a practical division of labor, however, does not eliminate responsibility and accountability to others. Shared responsibility requires reciprocal accountability: continuous dialogue, rigorous measurement of outcomes, and open disclosure of results among policymakers, institutional leaders, faculty, and students.

A practical division of labor combined with a rigorous focus on priorities at each level of responsibility can transform accountability from a political struggle to a collaborative effort. These two principles help make it possible for people with different roles to agree on valid measures of achievement and to develop and implement meaningful, effective strategies for improving performance.

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## Focus on a Few Explicit Goals

States have been establishing goals, assigning responsibility, and measuring performance in higher education for many years. These efforts to improve accountability and performance have helped, but they have not fully achieved their purposes.

A review of state accountability reports leads to an obvious conclusion – more data is not more accountability. In fact, incorporating vast amounts of information into accountability programs limits their usefulness. By failing to focus on a small, manageable set of state-level objectives, state level accountability becomes a reporting exercise rather than a tool for improving performance. Even at the institutional and departmental levels, a proliferation of goals and measures dilutes effort and impedes progress.

When accountability is "owned" by those involved, and when it focuses on a few priority goals within each domain of responsibility, it acquires power to motivate and guide better performance.

## Agree on Priorities, Focus on Explicit Goals

All too often, state and institutional accountability reports read like "a grab bag of available indicators with no sense of state priorities or a public agenda," notes researcher Joseph Burke. But this is changing. As demonstrated by several states, a better approach is to generate agreement on a clear set of priorities for higher education. Such priorities not only frame statistical tables and trends, but provide the focal point for explicit performance goals and develop the measures and indicators needed to monitor achievement. The following states provide examples.

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**Texas** identifies its higher education priorities in an ambitious *Closing the Gaps by 2015* initiative ([www.theccb.state.tx.us](http://www.theccb.state.tx.us)). These priorities provide the basis for statewide performance goals aimed at closing the gaps in higher education participation, student success, institutional excellence, and research contributions. Equally important, the priorities reflect the framework within which legislative actions are debated, public support is mobilized, efforts are assessed, and institutional and system progress is measured. All parties develop a sense of shared responsibility and accountability for meeting the goals.

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**Kentucky** uses five key questions to generate consensus around its priorities for higher education ([www.cpe.state.ky.us](http://www.cpe.state.ky.us)): Are more Kentuckians prepared for postsecondary education? Are more enrolling? Are more progressing and succeeding? Are more better prepared for life and work? How are communities and the economy benefiting? These questions frame public discussion, communications, and policy development, and promote public accountability for results.

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**Oklahoma** uses a combination of programmatic initiatives to define and promote higher education priorities – Gear Up for College, Economic Development Generating Excellence (EDGE), and Brain Gain 2010 ([www.okhighered.org](http://www.okhighered.org)). The framework focuses on improving performance in specific areas within a framework that promotes overall accountability. Goals are set relative to each initiative and for the state as a whole. Results are reported in annual higher education report cards that focus on student preparation, participation, affordability, benefits, completion, resources, and funding.

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These and other state-based initiatives draw on the model of performance-based reporting in *Measuring Up—The State-by-State Report Card for Higher Education*, released recently in its third edition by the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education. *Measuring Up* uses a framework of comparative performance indicators – Preparation, Participation, Affordability, Benefits, and Learning (still under development) – to grade states on their higher education performance. The categories reflect the National Center's view of priorities against which state performance should be measured. State-specific versions of this model are being adopted as a framework for higher education accountability, and states can use the Center's comparative performance data to compare results. This framework works best when priorities are clear and straightforward, when goals are few and focused (usually less than five), and when performance is monitored regularly using comparative data.



## Measure Results and Work for Improvement

"You get what you measure" is a shopworn cliché. Yet, measuring performance in the context of quantitative and qualitative goals focuses attention, reinforces progress, assures rigor, and builds confidence. Despite an enormous array of instruments and surveys to measure the inputs and outcomes of higher education, our system is weak on this dimension. Better accountability requires substantial improvements in the quality, cost-effectiveness, and *utilization* of data.

For example, current public data systems cannot reliably and adequately answer questions such as:

- How many students who enter higher education ultimately complete one or more degrees or certificates?
- What is the pattern of student persistence in higher education?
- On average, how long does it take students to reach different levels of attainment?
- What happens when students transfer? Do they tend to encounter delays or additional costs in getting a degree? Can the transfer process be improved?
- Does it take students longer to complete their work if they do not receive sufficient financial aid?
- Are student aid resources adequate to support low and moderate-income students?
- How much student aid comes from different funding sources?
- What is the actual "net price" of attending a college or university after grants and loans are taken into account? How fast is the "net price" increasing?
- Are students learning what they need to know to be successful in life and work?

To improve performance state and federal policymakers need data systems able to answer such questions. Institutional leaders need both the answers to these questions as well as more specific information about the experience and achievements of their own students and faculty. Better accountability for results at the institutional and state levels requires clearer goals (especially for student learning) and better information about outcomes. Federal and state governments and institutions all must improve how they measure results and how they respond to what they learn.

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# Who Is Responsible For What?

The principles of accountability outlined above demand action from all who share responsibility for the performance of higher education. The National Commission's analysis of roles and responsibilities and its recommendations for implementation are presented below.<sup>7</sup>

## Business and Civic Leaders

Educators are accountable for the effective operation of schools, colleges, and universities, but they cannot succeed without continuous support and feedback from community leaders.

Rapidly changing leadership and business conditions in the global economy, however, have made it more difficult to sustain business and civic involvement. Some states (North Dakota, South Dakota, and Kentucky, among others) have established annual "roundtables" or similar permanent mechanisms for civic and business leaders to discuss higher education with political and educational leaders. Such structures should be established in every state to connect higher education to community and regional needs and enable private sector leaders to understand the challenges inherent to sustaining a world-class higher education system.

We encourage business and civic leaders to:

1. *Communicate their needs and expectations to policymakers and educators both directly and through organized business and civic associations;*
2. *Seek and accept the call to serve on statewide educational policy boards and on governing boards of schools, colleges, and universities; and*
3. *Provide leadership and support for a continuous public commitment to educational improvement.*

## Governors, Legislators, State Boards and Executives for Higher Education

States invest \$70 billion annually to support instruction, research, public service, and student financial assistance in public and independent higher education. Institutions established, governed, and financially supported by states enroll about seventy-five percent of all college and university students. By virtue of their constitutional obligations, investments, and achievements, states are primarily responsible for public policies determining the accessibility, quality, affordability, and productivity of higher education. Most states report on performance in these areas; better performance, however, requires much more than accountability reporting.

Governors are responsible for articulating state priorities and pursuing them both through executive actions and by shaping public policies and investments. Most governors also select governing and coordinating board members who make policy and personnel decisions and advise elected officials on higher education issues. These appointments are crucial; the judgment, credibility, and integrity of board appointments should reflect the importance of their responsibilities.

Legislators, as representatives of local districts, are well-placed to reflect public priorities. They are responsible for allocating budgets, establishing revenue policies, and enacting laws to establish both the higher education policy framework and the operating ground rules for public institutions. The legislative process, gubernatorial leadership, and the "roundtables" discussed above can help articulate, aggregate, and balance local and regional needs to form specific state priorities for higher education.

Statewide policy boards played a significant role in the massive expansion of public higher education in the 1960s and 1970s and in its subsequent achievements. These governing or coordinating boards remain principally responsible for understanding public goals in higher education and recommending strategies for achieving them. In pursuing public goals, wise state policy leadership will recognize and utilize the resources of all sectors: public, independent, not-for-profit, and for profit providers of higher education.

## K-12 and Higher Education Disconnections

The lack of compatibility between K-12 and higher education policies and practices is one of the great failings of American education. Making the transition from high school to college is neither easy nor smooth. The fundamental disconnection between K-12 and higher education undercuts the high aspirations of hundreds of thousands of young people who want to go to college. The lack of accountability for solving this problem is a clear example of an outdated approach to education that has no place in the 21st Century.

For over six years the Stanford University "Bridge Project" led by Professor Mike Kirst, with funding from Pew Charitable Trusts and the U.S. Department of Education, investigated how these disconnections impact the ability of young people to successfully make the transition from high school to college. According to the report: "no one is held accountable for issues related to student transitions from high school to college."

### The Bridge Project suggested three major areas of reform:

- Provide all students, their parents, and educators with accurate, high quality information about, and access to, courses that will help prepare students for college-level standards.
- Focus on the institutions that serve the majority of students. Shift media, policy, and research

attention to include broad access to colleges and universities attended by the vast majority of students (approximately 80 percent)

- Create an awareness that getting into college is not the hardest part. Expand the focus of local, state, and federal programs from access to college to include access to success in college – access to the resources and information students need to prepare well for college and to make informed decisions.

One successful effort to provide students and families with better information and help improve the alignment between K-12 reform and university expectations is the "Standards for Success" (S4S) initiative sponsored by the Association of American Universities (AAU) and 17 of its member institutions in conjunction with the Pew Charitable Trusts.

Over 400 university faculty members from twenty research universities participated in developing comprehensive statements of knowledge and skills in six disciplinary areas: English, mathematics, natural sciences, social studies, second languages, and the arts. The project also examined state level high school assessments in more than twenty states in order to determine how well existing high school standards prepare students for college success. In addition, the project distributed its results to state education departments and to nearly 20,000 public high schools.

Well structured, led, and staffed statewide boards add expertise and continuity, provide a buffer from partisan politics, facilitate the collaborative development of sound policies, and enable states to remain focused on educational priorities even when political leadership changes. Such boards also collect and analyze vital data, facilitate working relationships with campus leaders, and provide an institutionalized way for private sector leaders to advise elected officials on higher education.

Although their role has been eroded in some places, statewide higher education boards are becoming increasingly important in the current climate of limited resources, complex accountability and performance issues, and growing public needs. Working with elected leaders and educators, their role as bipartisan, expert *policy advisors* is to stay focused on the public interest in higher education, challenging both institutions and policymakers to address issues within their purview.

Working together, elected leaders and statewide boards should focus accountability on identifying and meeting broad public priorities such as the rate of successful participation in higher education, equity in educational opportunity, and the relevance and effectiveness of instruction and research. This statewide perspective is essential, because the

aggregation of institutional needs and aspirations will not necessarily reflect public needs and priorities. Progress toward state goals should be monitored and publicly reported to inform policy debates and assure state policies, funding priorities, and institutional practices are designed and refined to achieve broad public objectives.

The imperative to focus on public priorities is not a call for increasing regulation; some states (e.g., North Dakota) have substantially *decreased* regulation to good effect. The key test for state policies is not how tightly they control higher education, but whether they yield the desired results. In the process of improving accountability for substance, reducing direct regulation of college and university operations can increase both efficiency and effectiveness.

The public interest in institutional accountability should focus on questions of cost-effectiveness and each institution's performance in fulfilling its mission. The missions of public institutions must reflect public needs and priorities, and the allocation of resources among different missions is a critical state responsibility. State leaders are also responsible for assessing whether institutions are contributing appropriately to statewide goals, and obtaining evidence that institutional practices are promoting quality and improved performance. Monitoring and improving performance within institutions is the responsibility of governing boards and administrators.

In many respects, the effectiveness of higher education policy depends on the quality of the relationships and the substance of the dialogue among governors, legislators, state board members, and state higher education executives. In performing their respective roles, we recommend these state leaders:

1. *Create statewide data systems across all levels of education to help inform policy and budgetary decisions that will close achievement gaps and promote greater equity in allocating resources;*
2. *Make the critical transition from high school to college a focus of accountability: colleges must help shape K-12 standards; college placement exams should be offered to high school juniors; and dual or concurrent early college programs should be encouraged;*
3. *Recognize that significant investments and improvements in teaching at every level must be a higher priority in order to improve college preparation and student success;*
4. *Establish goals based on broad state needs and priorities (in areas such as student participation and retention, student achievement, workforce needs, economic development, and research productivity);*
5. *Monitor statewide and regional results, and focus policy and resources on public priorities while reducing detailed controls on institutional operations;*
6. *Assess the learning of college-educated students statewide through professional certification and graduate school admissions exams, and other assessments administered to a sample of students;*
7. *Coordinate state appropriations, tuition, and student assistance policies to provide adequate financial support for institutional operations and ensure higher education is affordable to low and moderate-income students; and*
8. *Work with institutions to improve productivity by emphasizing priorities and achieving more efficient operations.*

## **The Federal Government**

For many reasons – including state constitutional roles, variation in state circumstances, and state support and governance of public institutions – the states are best equipped for articulating and pursuing specific public policies for higher education.

The federal government, however, plays a vital role in articulating broad national priorities for higher education and pursuing them through federal policy. For example, the Morrill Act of 1862 (which led to the creation of Land Grant Universities), the GI Bill, the National Defense Education Act, and the Higher Education Act all have importantly shaped higher education in the United States. These initiatives focus on issues shared in common among the states: access to opportunity, basic research, and data to inform policy.

The participation of low and moderate-income students in higher education depends on federal grant, loan, and work-study programs, supplemented with state and institutional assistance. GEAR-UP, TRIO, and federal support for minority serving institutions also play key roles in increasing the successful participation of minority and other disadvantaged students. Federal support for scholarly research and the rigor of federal peer review significantly determine the quality and productivity of the scientific community. And federal education research and data collection provide a foundation for state and institutional accountability systems as well as essential perspectives on national performance.

To continue progress toward our national aspirations for higher education, we recommend the federal government:

1. *Sustain and increase support for financial aid to low-income students, programs to close the gaps in educational opportunities, and research;*
2. *Establish a national student unit record data system with fail-safe privacy safeguards – the current system is outmoded and inadequate for assessing actual costs and student progress through higher education;*
3. *Expand sample sizes and administer the National Assessment of Adult Literacy (NAAL) every five years to provide statistically-valid information on the capacities of each state's workforce, including college educated adults;*
4. *Enhance the quality of information on higher education provided to prospective students by upgrading the current COOL website at the Department of Education; and*
5. *Continue to move aggressively to close down diploma and accreditation mills.*

Our recommendations concerning federal data systems reflect the increasing importance of National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) surveys for understanding higher education and measuring progress toward state and national educational goals. Improved data on student retention and success, financial aid, and adult knowledge and skills all are vital for state and institutional accountability systems as well as for federal programs.

**A student unit record system.** Most federal surveys of student enrollment and achievement are based on reports prepared by institutions on students currently enrolled. Graduation rates in four-year institutions, for example, are calculated by reporting the percentage of first-time, full-time freshmen who graduate within six years from the same institution where they began their studies.

While this approach is better than gathering no information at all, it is based on an outdated enrollment pattern when most students attended full time and completed degrees where they first enroll. This system loses track of students who transfer and graduate, and it ignores large numbers of students who begin their studies on a part time basis. It significantly underestimates graduation rates, and it is inadequate for assessing the critically important contributions of community colleges and public and independent urban institutions, which enroll many part-time students.

Many states have gained insights on important policy issues by developing unit record systems with information on individual student characteristics, financial assistance, enrollments, and degrees awarded. These systems enable policymakers to learn about transfer patterns and true graduation rates and address other important questions related to student preparation, persistence, and success.

Serious questions have been raised over potential threats to privacy through the misuse of data in a unit record system. Such questions must be fully addressed and substantial safeguards must be put in place in collaboration with the university community. All systems with data on individuals need impenetrable security firewalls to protect them from unauthorized use, firm rules restricting the use of data in ways that absolutely maintain confidentiality, and criminal penalties for violations. Such security systems are in place for numerous federal data bases, including IRS, Social Security, and NCES records.

For example, current NCES policy mandates information about individuals will never leave NCES unless "required by law." Only aggregated information, based on a sufficient number of people so no individual data are disclosed, may be transmitted outside NCES. Violations of this regulation are a Class E felony, with a \$250,000 fine and a 5-year jail term. Provisions prohibiting *any release* of individual data should be mandatory in the implementation of the proposed system.<sup>8</sup>

**Assessing adult knowledge and skills.** Due to the wide variety of learning objectives in postsecondary education, a single assessment of adult knowledge and skills is inappropriate. Our nation's future, however, depends in large part on the capabilities of the American workforce; sound policy requires a means for monitoring the knowledge and skills of the adult population in the states.

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) has helped mobilize and focus nation-wide K-12 educational improvement. The National Assessment of Adult Literacy (NAAL) provides a similar view of basic adult knowledge and skills, but its small national sample does not enable each state to get a handle on the educational capacity and needs of its workforce. We recommend expanding the sample size of this survey, including college

## State Accountability Systems

Most states have developed and are continuously refining systems for higher education accountability. Notable examples include:

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**Arizona Board of Regents** reports on the performance of its universities across a set of system-wide and institution-specific goals. This "report card" provides a framework for strategic plans that in turn help ensure that institutional efforts meet statewide needs.

~ ~ ~

**Connecticut Department of Higher Education** collects and reports data annually on the performance of its colleges and universities. Emphasis is given to workforce and research needs in relation to changing demographic and economic conditions.

~ ~ ~

**Iowa Board of Regents** compiles and reports data from its three public universities. Each senior institution has its own strategic plan; the Regents accountability framework provides the linkage to statewide needs and contributions.

~ ~ ~

**Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education** puts accountability front and center in all communications with the legislature, governor's office, other

areas of state government, and in its interactions with state postsecondary education providers. This focuses attention on progress made annually in meeting identified public needs.

~ ~ ~

**University of North Carolina Board of Governors** has extensive data on the performance of its four-year public institutions. Working collaboratively, the Board has added data regarding community college and private institution contributions to comprehensive statewide reports.

~ ~ ~

**North Dakota and South Dakota** each hold annual statewide roundtables that include legislators and community leaders as well as their respective governing boards and institutional leaders. Accountability provides a framework for reflecting and reporting back on the priorities identified by the roundtables.

~ ~ ~

**University of Wisconsin System** provides comprehensive annual reports on the students served by its institutions. These reports, especially those involving system and institutional performance report, are reviewed regularly in an effort to improve accountability.

educated adults in the sample, increasing its frequency to every five years, and including college-level questions in the survey. This recommendation will provide statistically valid information on the capacities and educational needs of each state's workforce.

In separate recommendations, we urge states and institutions to employ a portfolio of methods and instruments to measure and monitor collegiate-level learning. As the utilization of such assessments grows, educators and policymakers will be able to follow national trends in postsecondary learning as we now do for college-bound high school students through the SAT and ACT exams.

**Consumer information.** For the past half-century, competition for student enrollments has increasingly become an influential force in postsecondary education. Colleges and universities market themselves to prospective students by exploiting external rankings and by promoting their quality, prestige, convenience, amenities, and cost. External rankings of colleges and universities, often based largely on federal statistics, have become a small, but highly visible industry, sometimes with pernicious side-effects.

The federal government has a legitimate role in providing data to inform and protect consumers. Although providing accurate, appropriate information about higher education is a complex, delicate task, better information can improve the functioning of markets. NCES should continue to expand and improve public information about higher education, providing useful, balanced perspectives on institutional options while avoiding undue reporting burdens and an excessive federal role in the marketplace.

**Closing down accreditation and diploma mills.** The American people know higher education is a necessary ticket to a better life. Unfortunately, unscrupulous diploma and accreditation mills are seeking to cash in on these high hopes by creating fraudulent credentials. These mills diminish the integrity of the academic progress and defraud their customers. The federal government, state governments, accreditation agencies, and the postsecondary education community must take all necessary measures to close these fraudulent enterprises. Because these activities easily cross state boundaries, federal attention is especially critical.

## Institutions

Institutional accountability practices – the clarity and significance of goals, the rigor of assessments, and the resources devoted to improvement – are most important to performance because they directly influence faculty and students who do the actual work of higher education.

Our recommendations focus primarily on accountability for instruction and research, but colleges and universities have many other significant obligations. Although particular missions vary, to some extent all colleges and universities are obligated to serve their communities and regions.<sup>9</sup> They also are obligated to observe ethical standards and provide a safe, wholesome environment for students and employees, including compliance with all federal and state health, safety, and employment regulations. None of these obligations can be taken lightly, and depending on local needs and circumstances such obligations may be among an institution's most important priorities.

Institutional performance goals, appropriately more detailed than state goals, must reflect the institution's mission and performance targets in instruction, research, and public service. Governing boards and administrators are responsible for creating the conditions within institutions that lead to improved performance – a focus on goals, strategic planning to improve performance, and the managerial use of incentives, rewards, and sanctions at the departmental and individual levels.

Increasingly institutional leadership has been measured in terms of fund-raising and other external responsibilities. These are essential functions, but better accountability for performance requires more vigorous attention to internal priorities. College and university administrators must be accountable for fostering improved performance as well as acquiring additional resources.

In keeping with exemplary practice among institutional leaders, we recommend trustees and institutional leaders:

1. *Establish institutional goals aligned with fundamental public priorities;*
2. *Create the conditions, including necessary incentives and management oversight, for students and faculty to meet ambitious objectives in learning, research, and service;*
3. *Monitor progress on specific institutional goals aligned with fundamental public priorities;*
4. *Establish and communicate clearly to students explicit learning goals for each academic program as well as learning goals for general education;*
5. *Employ internal and external assessments of learning and publicly communicate the results in order to monitor and improve performance;*
6. *Employ rigorous, broadly conceived standards for institutionally-supported research and service; and*
7. *Re-assess institutional priorities continuously and implement strategies to increase productivity and cost-effectiveness.*

## Accrediting Associations

National and regional accrediting associations and professional accreditors play a critical role in higher education, including conferring accreditation used by the Department of Education to determine eligibility for federal student assistance. Although degree-granting authority is generally a matter of state law, some states also invite accreditors to advise state decisions on granting or withholding legal authority to offer a degree.

The increased demand for higher education is stimulating the development of hundreds of new non-profit and for-profit institutions and programs, many of which employ Internet-based instruction and marketing. Accreditors, together with the federal and state governments, are responsible for ensuring that the marketplace is open to inno-

vation and new providers, as well as protecting consumers from substandard or fraudulent degrees by certifying which degree programs meet standards.

The federal and state governments should continue to rely on national and regional accrediting associations to certify institutional eligibility for awarding degrees and state and federal programs. As mentioned above governments must work with accreditors to develop stronger quality control guidelines and strengthen laws and their enforcement to protect consumers from fraudulent degree and accreditation operations.

Over the past decade accrediting associations also have expanded their traditional functions in efforts to contribute to institutional improvement and communicate to the public the results of accrediting reviews.

These are vitally important initiatives to strengthen and sustain the role of accreditation in American higher education. In order to enhance their contributions to national goals we recommend accrediting associations:

1. *Establish learning goals appropriate to different degrees and certificates;*
2. *Assess institutional performance and capacity against established standards; and*
3. *Expand and enhance publicly available information on the findings of accrediting reviews.*

A degree of privacy promotes candor in accreditation reviews. And full disclosure of accreditation review details could expose accreditors to civil liability, especially for private non-profit and for-profit institutions. Such issues warrant consideration in the development of disclosure policies and procedures. Nevertheless, more substantive public disclosure of feedback to institutions would help motivate improvement and build public confidence in the integrity of the accreditation process.

## Faculty and Students

As presidents and trustees get reminded from time to time, the core of every institution of higher education is its faculty. The national agenda of improving student success, research quality, and productivity is unattainable unless faculty leadership, creativity, and energy are fully committed to these goals.

There is no shortage of good will, expertise, and commitment to these objectives among college and university faculty. But significant progress, especially in student success and productivity, requires change. Institutions (and faculty themselves) must make better use of academic time and talent, reducing less productive activity and allocating time more effectively to the highest priority goals in learning, research, and service. Faculty members must lead the way in devising more coherent programs of general education, more effective and efficient teaching techniques, and useful, authentic assessments of student learning. And institutional reward systems must provide more incentives and recognition for faculty contributions that increase student learning, retention, and success.

Students also must be active participants, not passive recipients in an excellent system of higher education. Student success requires personal motivation and hard work, as well as institutions committed to success, responsive to their needs, and open to their participation in shaping the educational experience. We urge students and faculty to:

1. *Become deeply and persistently engaged in establishing public and institutional priorities and giving advice and feedback to policymakers and institutional leaders; and*
2. *Exert the effort and commitment required to achieve personal and national goals for higher education.*



# Improving Instruction, Research, And Productivity

Accountability is not an end in itself; its purpose is to foster better-designed, better-implemented, adequately-supported, more successful educational programs. Although a comprehensive review of what can be done to improve performance in higher education is well beyond the scope of its report, the Commission discussed needs and actions to improve instruction, research, and productivity. The Commission's deliberations on these issues are summarized below.

## Instruction

Many American students reach extraordinary levels of intellectual attainment, but many shortcomings cry out for improvement:

- Too many students do not complete high school, and too many of those who do are ill-prepared for postsecondary education;
- Substantial achievement gaps persist between higher and lower socioeconomic groups, and between Whites and African Americans, Native Americans, and Hispanic Americans;
- Too many students do not complete academic programs in a timely manner;
- Employers report that too many graduates require additional training in the basic knowledge and skills required for sophisticated work; and
- Student learning objectives are often vaguely defined, and their achievement inadequately assessed.

Student learning, the purpose of instruction, is the only meaningful measure of instructional achievement. Yet, achieving a working consensus on accountability for student learning in higher education is difficult. Among the most challenging questions are:

- How can accountability deal with the many differences in learning objectives and student preparation?
- How can student preparation be improved?
- What should a college graduate know? What skills should he or she have?
- How should student learning be measured at the institutional, state, and national levels? How should those measures be used?

## Preparation

Improved student preparation for higher education is essential for improving learning. Colleges and universities can help by clarifying the requirements for success in higher education and working with elementary and secondary teachers and leaders to enable students to meet them. While recent reports differ about the extent of K-12 progress in improving student preparation, they agree too few students are taking and mastering the core curriculum and the skills required for a successful collegiate career.<sup>10</sup>

Higher education can play a powerful role in improving preparation by investing greater resources in their colleges of education that now prepare the majority of America's future teachers. In 2003 The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future issued a report showing that 50 percent of all new teachers leave the profession within five years. Policymakers, local school leaders, and teacher educators must focus more attention on improving teacher education and retention. New teachers must come into the profession confident and well prepared for what they have to do. Their salaries and working conditions should reflect their value to society and encourage them to stay, and their supervision and professional development should help them become increasingly effective.

University leaders need to restructure their teacher education programs and make their improvement a higher priority. Colleges of education must insist on rigorous admission and graduation standards for teacher preparation. Making sure that graduates have mastered subject content and have a wealth of clinical experience to address the real challenges of teaching are two significant areas where immediate improvements can be made.

State and local P-16 initiatives, K-12 improvement strategies, private initiatives from organizations such as ACT and the College Board, and national programs such as GEAR UP all contribute to better student preparation. And we recognize and applaud the current effort of the National Governors Association and other groups to improve secondary education. These efforts must be sustained and intensified.

### **Clear Goals, Rigorous Assessment – Better Instruction**

Student learning assessment is abundant within higher education. Courses assess learning in the context of explicit goals, as do programs preparing students for professional practice. The objectives of general education and even some degree programs, however, are vague. More explicit instructional goals and disciplined, transparent learning assessments will likely enhance student learning, institutional practice, and public confidence.

The Commission supports the Business-Higher Education Forum's recent report recommending a decentralized, institutionally-based approach to accountability for student learning. The Forum urges colleges and universities: 1) to define expectations for learning in different academic programs; and 2) to provide evidence of success in "broadly understandable terms."<sup>11</sup> The Forum also urges accreditors to articulate more clearly the expectations appropriate to different degree levels. Clear communication of expectations and results form the core of the recommendations.

A flexible, decentralized approach to learning objectives and assessment is necessary and desirable in higher education, but it is not enough. The academic community can improve student learning by clarifying the standards for college-level learning, designing more coherent curricula, and systematically assessing the results of instruction. The Association of American Colleges and Universities' (AAC&U) Greater Expectations report, summarized on the following page, articulates a thoughtful approach for increasing the coherence and rigor of the college curriculum.

Several states have developed systematic assessments of student learning in higher education. Five states are participating in a project employing a portfolio of instruments (exams to certify professionals and to assess preparation for graduate school, basic workplace skills, and critical thinking abilities) to measure dimensions of the knowledge and skills acquired by college students. Exams assessing general knowledge and skills are administered to a random sample of students. Lessons from this project, The National Forum on College-Level Learning, also are summarized in a sidebar below. We recommend *all* states participate in such efforts. The widespread use of such assessments will ultimately create more valuable, flexible tools for assessing and improving learning in higher education.

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While institutions should use extra-institutional student learning assessments to guide their instructional practices, external assessments of learning should not be employed to assess institutional effectiveness. Accurate and fair assessments of student learning as a result of *institutional* performance are virtually impossible due to variation in student ability and preparation, the growing practice of attending several institutions throughout a collegiate career, the complexity of learning objectives, and the difficulty of measuring which elements of learning were acquired in a particular place.

Accordingly institutional accountability for student learning should be internal, not external. External institutional sanctions or rewards for student learning are more likely to motivate the exclusion of students than the improvement of instruction. The student is the appropriate unit of analysis for measuring learning, and rigorous accountability for learning should occur *within* institutions where student needs and goals can be addressed directly.

## Accountability Worthy of the Academy's Educational Mission The AAC&U Greater Expectations Recommendations

Growing out of two decades of experimentation and dialogue, a consensus is emerging among higher education leaders and external stakeholders around the essential outcomes of a twenty-first-century college education. Newer, but equally important, are discussions about ways that campus-based assessments can provide greater public accountability for student learning.

A series of reports from the Greater Expectations initiative of the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) captures this consensus on learning outcomes and offers a new framework for shared accountability.

Greater Expectations affirms that colleges and universities must hold students to high standards of accomplishment in the following outcomes as it prepares them for a world of complexity and change. Through their college studies, students need to develop

- strong analytical, communication, quantitative, and information skills;
- understanding of, experience in, and inquiry into discipline-based knowledge about science, culture, and society;
- intercultural knowledge and collaborative problem-solving skills;
- responsibility for individual, civic, and social choices; and
- integrative ways of thinking and applying knowledge and skills in new settings.

Collectively, these outcomes form the core of a contemporary liberal education, one that is both practical and engaged with the wider world. They must be priorities for all students, not just those attending elite institutions or studying traditional arts and sciences disciplines. While varying in detail by discipline, these outcomes need to be fostered over time and across courses in all fields, including pre-professional studies such as business, engineering, education, and health sciences.

At the institutional level, colleges and universities need to accept publicly their responsibility for providing both the educational experiences that enable

students to achieve excellence in these outcomes and a climate that facilitates learning. They need to clarify their expectations, design intentional learning pathways that build on both general education and disciplinary studies, employ empowering teaching practices, and require integrative, culminating work in the last year of college.

Yet providing the environment is not sufficient in itself. Colleges and universities also need to assess whether and how well their students are achieving the consensus outcomes, since this is the best metric of an institution's success. To do so the faculty, including at the academic department level, will need to create appropriate rubrics to distinguish levels of quality and then use these rubrics to conduct milestone as well as senior-year summative assessments. Assessment of students' best and most advanced work, and presentation of the results for external review, can assure the public that graduates have met high standards on the core outcomes.

This accountability framework promotes standards of excellence for all students that are integrally tied to the important outcomes of college learning. It stresses higher order skills in communication, analytical judgment, and the integration of knowledge, while remaining anchored in meaningful educational projects judged by professionals. It avoids the common flaw in standardized testing, which is holding students to expectations that are much too low.

Such an approach to accountability needs to be supported by rigorous external accreditation standards so monitoring and public reporting on the quality of student learning is seen as part of the academy's collective commitment to both excellence and transparency.

For more detail see: AAC&U, *Greater Expectations: A New Vision for Learning as a Nation Goes to College* (2002); *Taking Responsibility for the Quality of the Baccalaureate Degree* (2004); *Our Students' Best Work: A Framework for Accountability Worthy of Our Mission* (2004), at [www.aacu.org](http://www.aacu.org).

## The National Forum on College-Level Learning

The National Forum on College-Level Learning pooled the efforts and experience of five states (Illinois, Kentucky, Nevada, Oklahoma, and South Carolina) to measure college-level learning outcomes. All five used a combination of measures – national licensing, graduate admissions tests, general intellectual skills tests administered to a random sample of students at institutions offering two- and four-year programs, and results from the NAAL – to get a system-wide snapshot of both the education capital being contributed by college-educated residents, and the effectiveness of colleges and universities in developing that capital. Cross-state comparisons allowed states to gauge their performance relative to peers.

What did the participating states learn from this pilot project to "systematically" measure collegiate learning?

First, there are no simple ways to measure college learning. Existing methods can be used to develop reasonably comparable cross-state performance indicators, and information that can be assembled

from diverse sources. But they leave substantial room for improvement.

Second, the states learned about themselves. The stories that emerged were useful, credible, and consistent with other information about education. The focus on student learning opened up new directions for policy and program development. Licensure and professional certification data, for example, demonstrated the effectiveness of some states' recent emphasis on education for workforce development, performance differences raised questions about how effectively institutions were serving student sub-populations, and capstone assessments proved useful in designing curriculums. Assessments in each area have spawned new conversations and approaches.

Third, all states packaged their assessments within a broader accountability framework as a way to address fundamental state education needs. Such learning measurement is unlikely to develop or be sustained without a common commitment to educational improvement that arises through shared accountability.

### Closing Performance Gaps

The most troubling and persistent student learning issue is the gap between the educational attainment of minorities and low-income students and that of higher-income white students. Setting goals and measuring performance, while essential for closing this gap, are insufficient. The barriers must be addressed directly.

Some students without the benefits of well-educated parents or above-average incomes succeed in postsecondary education through great ability and effort. Not surprisingly, however, far fewer succeed than those students who have more information, confidence in the future, and money.

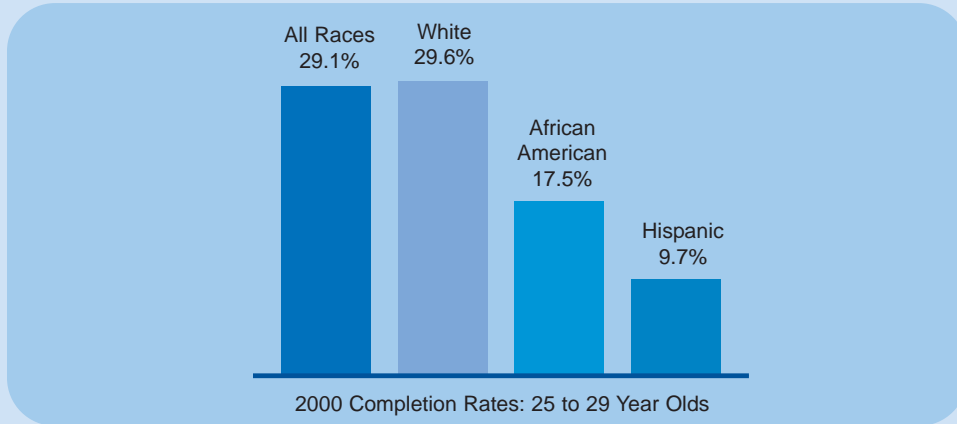
To reach the goal of widespread, successful educational attainment, policies and practices must give all students the knowledge, confidence, and financial assistance required to succeed in postsecondary education. Disadvantage starts early and persists; it must, therefore, be persistently addressed.

Educators and policymakers have increasingly come to understand that the educational system (from early childhood through elementary school, high school, and college) must be geared toward helping students become successful learners and workers. This requires:

- Early outreach and student support systems to increase aspirations, knowledge, and confidence;
- Rigorous preparation in elementary and secondary education;
- New pathways to college for non-traditional students;
- Greater emphasis on improving the transition from high school to college;

## Gaps in Attendance and Completion

U.S. Census data document dramatic gaps in college completion rates between Whites, African-Americans, and Hispanics.



Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census. *Educational Attainment in the United States*. Current Population reports, P-20 Series, 2001.

U.S. Department of Education research indicates the college attendance rate is significantly influenced by socio-economic status, despite the level of academic achievement.

By Achievement Test and Socioeconomic Status Quartile		SES Quartile	
		Lowest	Highest
Achievement Quartile	Highest	78%	97%
	Lowest	36%	77%

Postsecondary Enrollment Within Two Years of High School Graduation

Source: *Access Denied*, Department of Education, February 2001

- High quality teaching;
- Dependable and adequate student financial assistance; and
- Steadfast encouragement and support of students in higher education.<sup>12</sup>

Our nation's future rests largely on the shoulders of minority and low-income students who historically have not enjoyed solid academic preparation and affordable higher education. Their contributions to society depend on the opportunities they receive through the stewardship of higher education policymakers and educators.

## Research – Discovering and Applying Knowledge

No effort to improve accountability and performance in U.S. higher education can neglect the need to increase both the quality and relevance of research. Both the value of research and the unpredictability of its value are well established. While not all research is productive, important discoveries have come about by freeing expert scholars to follow their curiosity without regard for potential utility. Great advances also have emerged when scholars, engineers, and inventors have pursued some practical objective such as curing a disease, generating light, or improving transportation and communication.<sup>13</sup>

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World class standards  
are needed for both  
research and instruction;  
but it is unrealistic  
to expect, and wasteful  
to require, that every  
faculty member  
demonstrate excellence  
in both dimensions.

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Policymakers and institutional leaders must therefore rely on informed judgments, not definitive knowledge in deciding what and how much research to support. Such judgments must consider the capacity of individual scholars, the relevance of research to scientific and practical issues, and the role of research in developing the next generation of scholars.

In research, the most difficult questions involve allocating resources where they can achieve the highest yield on investment, while maintaining a balance with the equally-important goals of instruction and productivity. While research deserves to be held in high regard, it greatly and sometimes unduly influences the culture and aspirations of institutions where instruction is the predominant mission. The disproportionate emphasis on research in the faculty reward system adversely affects instructional improvement and expenditure control, and in cases of overinvestment, it tends to erode confidence in the quality and cost-effectiveness of research.

Because research and teaching are interrelated, it is hard to strike the right balance. Research enriches understanding and teaching quality; teaching often advances research productivity by stimulating creative thinking. All faculty members, especially those who establish learning goals and design the curriculum, must understand research principles and keep current with changes in their field. World class standards are needed for both research and instruction; but it is unrealistic to expect, and wasteful to require, that every faculty member demonstrate excellence in both dimensions.

The late Ernest Boyer eloquently argued research in U.S. universities is too narrowly focused, especially in institutions whose faculty and facilities are ill-equipped for basic research. He urged institutions *also* to provide significant recognition and rewards for integrative, cross-disciplinary scholarship, applied research, and teaching so as to make better use of faculty talent and address urgent human needs.<sup>14</sup> Many in higher education accept these views. Yet rigorous programs of integrative, applied, and pedagogical scholarship are scarce, and visible examples of accountability and reward systems to encourage such broadly defined scholarly work are lacking. While the primary competence of universities is not in practical application or commercial development, scholars *should* seek more effective connections to practice, policy, and industry in order to address needs and advance research productivity.

Finally, many talented and motivated foreign students have come to the U.S. for graduate education (especially in science and technology) and become leading researchers in U.S. universities and knowledge-based industries. Other foreign graduate students have returned home with a deeper understanding of their discipline and of the U.S. Such migration of talent benefits the U.S. and the world, and should be encouraged. The growth of research capacity and graduate education in other countries, however, is likely to erode the ability of the U.S. to retain imported talent. Accordingly, we must motivate and enable more talented American students to pursue scholarly careers, especially in science and technology.

## Productivity

For obvious reasons, the productivity and cost-effectiveness of higher education is a core issue in accountability. Both families and governments face many demands for their money – even though higher education is a high priority, its efficiency, productivity, and affordability will always be important public concerns.

Students and policymakers face a disorienting array of higher education *prices* (tuition and fees) and *costs* (institutional expenditures per student), reflecting differences in tuition and student aid philosophies, the underlying cost structure of programs, and the availability of revenues.<sup>15</sup> The prices students pay also vary substantially from published rates as many receive grants, loans, and tax credits from federal, state, and institutional assistance programs. Both the cost of higher education and confusion over its price are problems.

## Cost-effectiveness

Improving cost-effectiveness in higher education is challenging because:

- Educated college and university employees command a premium in the knowledge economy;
- A reputation for quality is highly correlated with institutional wealth;
- Student demand is high, especially to attend prestigious institutions, and incentives to reduce prices are weak;
- Institutional resources vary substantially; the least prosperous can make a strong case for additional resources, while the most prosperous consider their funding essential to maintaining quality and competitive position;
- Higher levels of instruction (baccalaureate or graduate) and increasing program complexity too often have been used as false measures of institutional quality; and
- Some state and institutional priorities – like recruiting top students with scholarships and retaining faculty with higher salaries and research support – increase costs.

These factors drive up tuition and fees, the demand for state appropriations, and the cost of need-based student financial assistance. In the context of recent state revenue shortfalls and pressures on the federal budget, higher education cost increases have contributed to enrollment caps and the erosion of the financial assistance needed by low and moderate-income students.

While the pursuit of quality always exists in tension with the need for widespread participation in higher education, *both* goals can be achieved. With sustained effort, governmental policymakers and higher education leaders can and must finance improvements in both scale and quality by pursuing necessary productivity gains *and* making strategic public investments.

It is wishful thinking to imagine that additional public investment will make it easy to achieve state and national higher education goals. The most important financial resource is not "new money," but existing investments; these can and must be used more effectively to contain costs, improve quality, and attain educational objectives.

Similarly, it is wishful thinking to imagine that productivity gains can make quality higher education substantially less expensive or eliminate the need for additional investment. Educating more people to a higher level is valuable; it will not miraculously become free. State and federal decision-makers must seriously evaluate the potential returns from further investments in higher education, and should work to improve student preparation, possibly the most powerful means of increasing productivity. For example, states and institutions nation-wide are increasing "system" productivity by:

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- Using incentives to improve student preparation with rigorous college preparatory curricula, better K-12 instruction, and improved curricular alignment between K-12 and higher education standards;
- Reviewing institutional priorities to re-allocate resources from lower to higher priorities, including re-thinking marketing and positioning strategies such as competitive tuition discounting and the amount of money allocated to "merit aid";
- Reducing costs and increasing quality by using technology in high-enrollment courses where economies of scale justify development costs;
- Achieving greater curricular coherence, thereby avoiding excessive credit hours and enhancing progress to degree completion; and
- Re-engineering support and administrative services for greater efficiency, including centralization, decentralization, outsourcing, collaborative purchasing, and resource sharing.

### ***Budgeting for Improved Performance***

Budgeting lies at the core of "measuring results and working for improvement." Money affects behavior, and programs need financial resources to be effective. Institutional, state, and federal policymakers must send consistent signals about priorities by responding to results and budgeting resources to achieve public goals.

Budget allocations address two key questions – what is required for continuity and predictability, and what is required for improvement and change? The right balance between the two is a matter of judgment. At the state level, critical issues include tuition, financial aid policy, and institutional support.

Over the past half-century, various performance budgeting strategies (program planning and budgeting, zero-based budgeting, performance funding, and management by objectives) have influenced state and federal government budgeting decisions. The logic of performance budgeting systems – define goals, measure results, allocate resources to priorities, reallocate from lower priorities, and reward performance – seems unassailable. Despite their attractiveness, however, performance budgeting schemes have been constrained by multiple goals, differing opinions about priorities, inadequate information, and other messy realities.<sup>16</sup>

While states have achieved goals using different budgeting procedures, several principles stand out from state budgetary successes and failures. Effective state budgeting for higher education:

- Focuses on the "big picture," considering how institutional support and student assistance are addressing top state priorities. Extensive regulatory controls and state budget procedures with detailed incentives and sanctions for institutions expand bureaucracy and are inconsistent with an appropriate division of labor.
- Establishes an appropriate mix of institutional types, supports excellence in all missions, and avoids the dilution of resources and quality through the over-expansion of graduate and professional education.
- Reflects reliable data and an understanding of institutional practices and resources, student participation and success, public needs, and performance results without micro-managing budget allocations. Institutional governing boards and administrators require the flexibility to pursue priority goals and reward performance in teaching and research.
- Achieves a balance between continuity and change, providing reasonable predictability to students and institutions and the flexibility to address performance issues, changing conditions, and state priorities.

Experience also indicates different approaches can succeed within this framework. Some states use formulas, some do not. Some provide modest "bonuses" for performance outcomes addressing priorities, others provide direct budgetary support for institutional initiatives to improve quality, increase student retention and graduation, expand instruction in priority areas, or improve research competitiveness. Different technical budgetary mechanisms can serve state purposes so long as performance and productivity goals are reinforced along the way.



## Linking Financing and Accountability for Performance

Using performance-based criteria to shape higher education budgets, allocate public funding, and reward results seems like an obvious step toward greater accountability and improved performance. Nearly all states have taken this step, but in differing ways and with decidedly mixed results.

During the 1990s, Joseph C. Burke analyzed performance-based approaches to higher education. By his count, fifteen states initiated "performance funding" formulas, which allocate explicit amounts of funding based on performance measures – a third of these fifteen states later set the formulas aside. While direct formula-based performance funding has not spread, twenty-one states employ some performance measures in allocating resources, and virtually all states monitor performance indicators as part of budget review.

Burke's studies show enthusiasm for the theory of performance funding, but document the difficulties that states encounter in practice. On one hand, because money motivates behavior, it makes sense to use incentives to improve performance. On the other hand, good performance *requires* money; good performers becoming better-funded may become less efficient, poor performers becoming less well-funded may have difficulty improving. Both this conceptual issue and various practical problems illustrate the limits of state-level performance funding. Such problems include: deciding how much to allocate to performance funding, how to measure

performance, how to keep the budget process efficient, how to preserve budgeting continuity and predictability, and how to influence faculty and student performance.

Burke's recommendations to address these obstacles include:

- Use summits or commissions of business, government, civic, and educational leaders to outline and periodically review a public agenda for higher education that reflects state priorities, academic concerns, and market forces.
- Involve campus leaders in developing plans on how to bring reporting, budgeting, and funding for state priorities down to the campus level, thereby increasing state level understanding of campus dynamics.
- Use indicators to show how colleges use funding to improve their performance (including in accreditation reviews and public communications).
- Encourage governors, legislators, regents, and trustees to use the indicators in planning and policymaking.

For additional detail see: Joseph C. Burke, "Reinventing Accountability – From Bureaucratic Rules to Performance Results," *Achieving Accountability in Higher Education: Balancing Public, Academic, and Market Demands* (Jossey-Bass, 2004).

## Conclusion

Public interest in accountability is rooted in the growing importance of higher education and uncertainty concerning its adequacy and affordability. We need better results from higher education, and better approaches for accountability are essential.

Our recommendations urge policy leaders and educators to rely on the aspirations and pride of the American people and the fundamental democratic principles of shared responsibility, public accountability, and trust. The changes required do not reside in these principles, but in the visibility of goals and the intensity of the commitment to assure that higher education effectively serves public and individual priorities.

Higher education leaders must acknowledge the increasing public need for higher education, align institutional priorities with the goals of widespread student achievement, world-class research, and increased productivity, and rigorously assess and improve performance.

Federal and state leaders must undertake, together with educators, well-designed and implemented initiatives to address public priorities for higher education.

Public data systems must monitor important issues, focus on goals, communicate results to the public, and provide institutions with constructive, diagnostic information.

Business and civic leaders must engage with public officials and educators to define priorities and build the public confidence and determination to do what it takes to succeed.

The Commission firmly believes its recommendations for accountability based on a shared commitment, a practical division of labor, a focus on priority goals, and rigorous measurement of results will build confidence, sustain improvement, and extend to future generations the benefits of a great American system of higher education.

## Appendix A

### Higher Education in the United States: Diverse institutions, Functions, Students, and Stakeholders

Beginning in the colonial era, communities, religious groups, enterprises, and governments established colleges and universities in the United States to serve a variety of missions and functions. Today, U.S. postsecondary education includes thousands of schools, colleges, universities, and multi-campus systems that educate learners with different backgrounds and educational objectives. These institutions are accountable to their students and other stakeholders, within an increasingly dynamic, competitive, and demanding higher education market.

Accountability systems in the U.S. must simultaneously respect and seek to improve the performance of this diverse higher education system. This "snapshot" of what higher education looks like and who it serves is a reminder of what is included in the phrase "higher education in the United States," and who shares responsibility for improving its performance.

**Independent, Non-Profit Institutions.** The oldest independent, non-profit institutions originated as colonial colleges established to educate spiritual leaders and professionals. Currently, nearly two thousand such institutions, usually governed by citizen boards of trustees, enroll approximately twenty percent of all higher education students. Included in this sector are many of the foremost research universities, which carry out both privately and publicly funded research and scholarship. Through instruction, research, and other services, independent institutions serve the broad public purpose of higher education, as well as the particular religious, cultural, or geographical communities from which they emerged.

**Public Colleges and Universities.** Also in the colonial era, states established the first institutions in what became a nation-wide system of public colleges and universities. In 1791, the Tenth Amendment to the Constitution reserved to the states or the people all rights not constitutionally delegated to the federal government. This eventually led all states to establish public educational systems extending through higher education. In 1862, the federal government granted public lands to support state colleges and universities which, in addition to providing general higher education, offered training in agriculture and engineering. Beginning in the late 1800s and continuing into the early twentieth century, many states established schools and colleges to meet the demand for teachers and college-educated individuals in other fields. Many of these institutions later became state and regional universities. In response to growing demand for higher education beginning in the 1950s and continuing into the 1970s, most states established new institutions or expanded existing ones. This expansion included systems of community colleges to increase access to higher education through two-year degree programs, and to serve growing numbers of part-time students and working adults. Today, nearly 1,200 community colleges and over six hundred four-year institutions, including large, diverse universities and multi-campus systems, are governed by publicly-appointed or elected citizen trustees. Together, these public institutions enroll about seventy-five percent of all post-secondary students.

**For-Profit Institutions and Providers.** Independent, for-profit postsecondary education has evolved from informal contracts between scholars or artisans and their students, through several phases of workforce training and development, to today's privately capitalized, multi-state corporate education providers. Currently, this sector includes more than three hundred institutions offering four-year programs, nearly eight hundred offering two-year programs, and over 1,300 with programs of less than two years. Most programs are tailored to prepare students for specific careers, and many serve working adults. Privately owned institutions now enroll approximately five percent of the post-secondary students. Some segments of this sector enroll high proportions of students who rely on federal (and in some instances state) financial aid programs to pay their education-related expenses; other segments enroll primarily students who use their own resources or employer-paid education benefits.

**Diversity of Functions.** These 6,600 institutions in the U.S. vary in size, complexity, and function. At one end of the spectrum, thousands of small institutions offer a single program; at the other end, about two hundred large, complex institutions offer programs in dozens of areas and credentials ranging from continuing education certificates to doctorate and professional degrees. Many combinations exist between these extremes. Of just over 4,200 degree-granting institutions, over 1,800 offer two-year or associate degree programs, nearly 1,500 offer four-year or

baccalaureate level degrees but no graduate degrees, 650 offer masters degrees or lower, 110 offer limited doctoral programs, and 152 offer extensive doctoral programs. About 2,400 institutions do not grant degrees; most of these focus on a single area of instruction in programs of less than two years and operate as for-profit organizations.

As part of their mission, public and non-profit institutions generally make local contributions to educational, cultural, and community life. This involves a wide variety of extra-curricular programs and forms – from educational outreach services to free or reduced tuition for high school students or senior citizens or sponsorship of cultural events. Without question, these activities add to the quality of life as well as the economic viability of many communities.

More specifically related to economic development and the advancement and application of knowledge, higher education institutions (particularly doctoral institutions) provide much of the nation's basic and applied research, including nearly all basic scientific research. The top 150 research institutions expended \$30 billion to support research in fiscal 2001 – \$17.5 billion federally funded, \$6 billion from institutional funds, and \$6.5 billion (roughly \$2 billion each) from states, industry, and other sources. Comprehensive research universities also provide health care and other direct services in clinical settings connected to professional programs.

**Stakeholders.** Higher education stakeholders and customers are as varied as institutional functions and services. In principle, all institutions and faculty are directly accountable to students, trustees (directors or shareholders), and those served through grants, contracts, or client relationships. Depending on the circumstances, institutions and faculty are also accountable to funders, donors, accreditors, professional associations, and compliance with relevant law and regulation. Irrespective of legal governance structures, all institutions benefiting directly or indirectly from public support are ultimately accountable to the public. In practice, of course, these obligations result in a variety of specific roles and responsibilities relative to different stakeholders, affecting everything from classroom behavior to project reporting and procedural and legal requirements.

**Students.** Fifty years ago, U.S. higher education enrollment was 2.4 million (1.6 percent of the population). Today, U.S. higher education enrolls over sixteen million students (about 5.5 percent of the population). In 1954, only one-fifth of adult workers had any postsecondary education; now virtually all of the next generation intends to obtain some. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) projects further enrollment increases between twelve percent and nineteen percent by 2012, based primarily on the growth of citizens aged eighteen to twenty-four.

Within these growth statistics, substantial changes are also occurring in the characteristics of students. For example:

- Student enrollments have and will continue to become more racially, ethnically, and socially diverse. Currently, sixty-eight percent of total postsecondary students identify themselves as white, eleven percent African-American, ten percent Hispanic, six percent Asian, and one percent American Indian. Nearly four percent are foreign students. In three states, none of these groupings includes a majority of postsecondary students, and in an additional eleven states, minority enrollments comprise over thirty percent of the total. This social and demographic diversity will continue to increase, particularly if improvements are made in student preparation and participation rates.
- Participation rates and students' age distribution have changed significantly, particularly with the expansion of adult learners. Thirty-six percent of all eighteen to twenty-four year-olds and forty-three percent of new high school graduates are enrolled in some postsecondary education, up from thirty-two percent and thirty-nine percent, respectively, in 1990. Thirty-nine percent of students enrolled in degree-granting institutions are above age twenty-five, including eighteen percent over thirty-five.
- Student mobility and enrollment patterns are also changing, with consequences for both students and institutions. Nearly sixty percent of undergraduates enroll in more than one college or university, at least for some part of their program. Roughly thirty-six percent enroll across state lines, and ten percent earn a degree in a state other than the one in which they began. Sixty percent are enrolled full-time, and forty percent are enrolled part-time. The vast majority of students now receive some form of financial aid – loans or grants. Most students are employed in some capacity during the school year; many students are employed full time.
- Each year, institutions award nearly six hundred thousand associate degrees, over 1.2 million baccalaureate degrees, five hundred thousand master's degrees, eighty thousand professional degrees, and forty-five thousand doctorates.

Sources: Tables and statistical reports from the NCES (mostly from the 2000-01 academic year), National Science Foundation, and data from NCES longitudinal surveys provided by Clifford Adelman.

## Appendix B

### Members of the National Commission on Accountability in Higher Education

#### Commission Chairmen

**Frank Keating** served two terms as governor of Oklahoma and currently is president and CEO of the American Council of Life Insurers. As president and CEO of ACLI, Governor Keating is the chief representative and spokesman for the life insurance industry in Washington, D.C., and all 50 state capitals. His 30-year career in law enforcement and public service included stints as an FBI agent; U.S. Attorney and state prosecutor; and Oklahoma House and Senate member. He served Presidents Reagan and Bush in the Treasury, Justice, and Housing Departments.

**Richard W. Riley** served two terms as U.S. Secretary of Education and two terms as governor of South Carolina. Since leaving his national post in January 2001, Riley has rejoined the law firm of Nelson Mullins Riley & Scarborough. He also has been appointed Distinguished Professor at his alma mater, Furman University, and serves as Advisory Board Chair of the Richard W. Riley Institute of Government, Politics and Public Leadership there. Additionally, Riley has been named Distinguished Professor at the University of South Carolina and Distinguished Senior Fellow at NAFSA: Association of International Educators.

#### Commissioners

**Kenneth H. Ashworth** served as commissioner of higher education for Texas for over 21 years. He is presently teaching courses in public policy development and public administration and management at the University of Texas LBJ School of Public Affairs and at Texas A&M University's George Bush School of Government and Public Service. During his early career, Dr. Ashworth worked in Washington with the U.S. Treasury Department and the Urban Renewal Administration and then with the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency. He was with the U.S. Office of Education in Washington and with the University of Texas System Administration, where he was vice chancellor for academic affairs. He also served as executive vice president of the University of Texas at San Antonio.

**Dwight H. Evans** is executive vice president of Southern Company and president of the company's External Affairs Group, directing environmental policy, regulatory affairs, legislative affairs, corporate communication and supply chain management. Evans previously served as president and CEO of Mississippi Power, executive vice president of external affairs at Georgia Power, and vice president of governmental affairs for Southern Company. He is a member of the board of directors of the United States Chamber of Commerce, the National Association of Manufacturers, the Georgia Department of Industry, Trade & Tourism, and U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution. Mr. Evans is also on the boards of the Southern Education Foundation Inc., Piedmont College and the Georgia Tech Foundation.

**Stanley O. Ikenberry** served as president of the University of Illinois for sixteen years, and as president of the American Council on Education (ACE) for five years. Dr. Ikenberry currently has the role of Regent Professor and President Emeritus of the University, and holds an appointment with the University's Institute of Government and Public Affairs. Dr. Ikenberry is active as a national speaker and consultant and is also President of the Board of Overseers at TIAA-CREF, the leading retirement system for college and university employees in the United States.

**Roberts T. Jones** is the President of Education & Workforce Policy, LLC, a policy consulting firm whose singular focus is in the advancement of education and training policy in the Corporate, Education, and government sectors. Mr. Jones served as the President and CEO of the National Alliance of Business, the Assistant Secretary of Labor under President Reagan and again under President Bush, vice president of RJR Nabisco, Inc., and as a Chief of Staff to two US Congressmen. Currently, he serves on the Boards of American College Testing (ACT), Business Higher Education Forum (BHEF), National Center for Education Accountability (NCEA), National Council on Teaching–Americas Future (NCTAF), and the National Council on Economic Education (NCEE). He also serves on the board of the Management and Training Corporation (MTC) as well as the Board of Jones International University (JIU). Mr. Jones is the co-author of the recently released book, "The Jobs Revolution: Changing The Way America Works."

**Thomas D. Layzell** is President of the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education and President of the State Higher Education Executive Officers. Dr. Layzell served as Mississippi's Commissioner of Higher Education for eight years and Chancellor of the Illinois Board of Governors of State Colleges and Universities for ten years. He is a former President of the National Association of System Heads and former member of the Council of Presidents of the Association of Governing Boards. Earlier in his career, Dr. Layzell worked at Governors State University in University Park, Illinois, advancing to the position of Vice President for Administration. He also served as a staff member at the Illinois Board of Higher Education.

**Carol Liu** is a member of the California Assembly. She is chair of the Assembly Higher Education Committee, and sits on the Assembly Education Committee and on the Budget Committee and its Education Finance Subcommittee. Assemblywoman Liu is a member of the Assembly Committees on Transportation and Governmental Organization, and chair of the Select Committee on Groundwater Quality and Quantity. She also serves on the Select Committees on Title IX; Entertainment and the Arts; Asian Trade; Domestic Violence; Privacy; Language Access; and the Joint Committee on the Arts. In addition, Assemblywoman Liu is a Trustee of the UC Berkeley Foundation. She taught public school for 14 years before becoming a school administrator. She also served as Executive Director of the Richmond Federation of Teachers. She served as President of the Pasadena City College Foundation Board and as a member of the La Cañada Flintridge City Council for eight years, including two terms as Mayor.

**Dave Nething** has been a member of the North Dakota Senate since 1967. He is a retired lawyer. Senator Nething served as Senate Leader from 1974 to 1986 and as President Pro Tem from 1997 to 1998. He is a past president of the National Conference of State Legislatures, past president of the National Republican Legislators Association, past member of the Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations and the Administrative Conference of the United States. Senator Nething also is past president of the Foundation for State Legislatures and has served as a Commissioner for the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education since 1999.

**Lana Oleen** served 16 years in the Kansas Senate and served as Majority Leader from 2000-2004. She also served as Chair of the National Conference of State Legislators' (NCSL) Standing Committees, Chair of the Midwestern Higher Education Compact (MHEC) and currently chairs the Audit Committee for the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards. Senator Oleen is a teacher by profession and is a Kansas Master Teacher.

**Richard Pattenau** became president of the University of Southern Maine in July of 1991, after serving for five years as vice president for academic affairs at Central Connecticut State University. Prior to that he served for five years as associate vice president for Academic Affairs at the State University of New York at Binghamton, and was a member of the political science faculty and an associate dean for six years at Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa. He currently serves, or has served, as a board member of the Portland Museum of Art, World Affairs Council, Blue Cross/Blue Shield, the Maine Science & Technology Foundation, Chamber of Commerce, Maine Development Foundation, the Gulf of Maine Aquarium, United Way, Maine Medical Center, Institute for Civic Leadership and the Portland Symphony Orchestra.

**Martha Romero** serves as Founding Director of the Community College Leadership Development Initiatives (CCLDI). Dr. Romero taught graduate seminars in organizational development at the University of Colorado and in the Community College Leadership program at the University of New Mexico and now teaches at the Claremont Graduate University. She served as Vice President for Instruction at Pikes Peak Community College, and as President/Superintendent of the Siskiyou Joint Community College District consisting of two small, rural community college campuses in northern California. Dr. Romero was a member of the senior management team responsible for policy analysis and development for Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE). She also served as Academic Affairs Officer for the Colorado Commission on Higher Education.

**Blenda J. Wilson** is the first President and Chief Executive Officer of the Nellie Mae Education Foundation, the largest foundation in New England focused exclusively on education. Dr. Wilson was formerly the president of California State University, Northridge. Prior to her tenure at CSU - Northridge, Dr. Wilson was chancellor of the University of Michigan, Dearborn. She previously served as executive director of the Colorado Commission on Higher Education; Vice President, Effective Sector Management, at Independent Sector (IS); and senior associate dean at the Harvard University Graduate School of Education. Dr. Wilson began her career in higher education administration at Rutgers University in New Jersey. She is past chair of the American Association of Higher Education and she also serves on the Board of Trustees of the J. Paul Getty Trust and the Board of Directors of Partners Health System. She is Deputy Chairman of the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston and a Director of Federated Dorchester Neighborhood Houses.

## Appendix C

### Members of the Commission's Panel of Advisors

SHEEO requested five leading researchers and policy analysts to provide specific materials and assistance to the National Commission on Accountability in Higher Education . These individuals, their institutional affiliations, and areas of expertise are listed below.

**Joseph C. Burke**, The Nelson A. Rockefeller Institute of Government, has done extensive research and writing on performance reporting and performance-based budgeting and funding in higher education, including several national surveys. He is editor and contributor to *Accountability in Higher Education: Balancing Public, Academic, and Market Demands* (forthcoming from Jossey-Bass). Burke's written testimony to the Commission provided a brief overview of different types of accountability reporting and uses, and outlined framework of core indicators.

**Peter T. Ewell**, National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS), is a leading researcher, consultant and developer of systems and practices for student assessment at national state, and institution levels. He also has written extensively on how learning assessment contributes to broader accountability strategies.

**Margaret A. Miller**, National Forum on College-Level Learning, has led state and national initiatives to develop multi-institution student learning assessments in several contexts. Miller's statement to the Commission described the development of a model to assess the knowledge and skills of college graduates, and the experience gained in implementing this model in five states – Kentucky, Illinois, Nevada, Oklahoma, and South Carolina.

**Nancy Shulock**, Institute for Higher Education Leadership & Policy, California State University, Sacramento, is a leading researcher on accountability systems, whose work is central to the design of the new accountability structure currently in proposed legislation introduced in California. Shulock's statement reviewed the California and national contexts, and outlined her key findings on effective state accountability systems.

**Jane V. Wellman**, The Institute for Higher Education Policy, is a researcher and consultant on financing and policy, and was the lead consultant-author for the recent Business-Higher Education Forum report on *Public Accountability for Student Learning in Higher Education*. Wellman's statement provided an overview of the background, content, and recommendations of that report.

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> In 2002, the U.S. high school graduation rate of seventy-three percent ranked sixteenth of twenty reporting OECD countries. The U.S. ranked second in the educational attainment of the adult population (aged twenty-five to sixty-four), but six other countries increased educational attainment faster between 1995 and 2002. The U.S. "stockpile" of educated citizens from the baby boom is approaching retirement, and it will take improved performance to replace them. *Education at a Glance, OECD Indicators* (2004). Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. Paris.
- <sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of Education, *The Condition of Education 2004*, Indicator 15, Postsecondary Expectations of 10th Graders. NCES 2004-77. U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey.
- <sup>3</sup> National Science Board, National Science Foundation, Division of Science Resources Statistics. *Science and Engineering Indicators 2004*. Arlington, VA (NSB 04-01) [May 2004]: Overview pages, pp. O-3 to O-19.
- <sup>4</sup> The flyleaf on Paul Dressel's *Handbook of Academic Evaluation* published by Jossey-Bass in 1976 begins: "In a time of widespread doubt about the results and outcomes of higher education, evaluation and accountability have become mandatory." This, along with other insights in his five hundred page review of evaluation and accountability, remains true.
- <sup>5</sup> In his opening essay, "The Many Faces of Accountability" (in *Achieving Accountability in Higher Education: Balancing Public, Academic, and Market Demands*, forthcoming, Jossey-Bass, 2004), Joseph Burke cites the North Dakota Roundtable on Higher Education and the Mississippi Leadership Summit on Higher Education as examples of how 360-degree accountability can build commitment to public goals.
- <sup>6</sup> As reported by Joseph Burke and Peter Ewell, faculty members consider state-based institutional accountability "administrative work," disconnected from their teaching and research responsibilities. Joseph C. Burke, "Reinventing Accountability: From Bureaucratic Rules to Performance Results," and Peter Ewell, "Can Assessment Serve Accountability? It Depends on the Question," *Achieving Accountability in Higher Education: Balancing Public, Academic, and Market Demands* (forthcoming, Jossey-Bass, 2004).
- <sup>7</sup> The recent report of the Business Higher Education Forum, *Public Accountability for Student Learning in Higher Education*, American Council on Higher Education (February 2004) 22-25, includes a helpful discussion of different roles and responsibilities in accountability.
- <sup>8</sup> If implemented as proposed, the recommended student unit record system would be able to provide comprehensive information now collected for a sample of students through the National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS). This survey provides valuable information on the impact of state, federal, and institutional student financial assistance programs, but the sample size is too small to be helpful to many states. Especially if the proposed student unit record is not implemented, the expansion of this survey to provide statistically valid information for all states is recommended by the Commission. The investment needed to expand the NPSAS sample size to yield statistically valid information on student assistance programs in all states would be tiny relative to the importance of these programs.
- <sup>9</sup> Accountability for community service is universal in higher education, but from it takes varies according to the heritage and mission of institutions. The demographics and diversity of functions and stakeholders of American colleges and universities are summarized in *Appendix A*.
- <sup>10</sup> See *Measuring Up 2004: The National Report Card on Higher Education*, National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, San Jose, 2004 and *Crisis at the Core: Preparing All Students for College and Work*, ACT, Iowa City, 2004. *Measuring Up 2004* reports improvement in student preparation across the nation. The *Crisis at the Core* report states that most students are not ready for college or work and the nation has made virtually no progress over the last decade. *Measuring Up 2004* reports improvement from previous years, while *Crisis at the Core* reports the percent of students meeting a benchmark. Different data and methods are used to measure high school student preparation in each report.



- <sup>11</sup> Business-Higher Education Forum, *Public Accountability for Student Learning in Higher Education: Issues and Options*, American Council on Education (February, 2004) 23.
- <sup>12</sup> C.f. *A Shared Agenda: A Leadership Challenge to Improve College Access and Success*, Pathways to College Network., 2004, [www.pathwaystocollege.net](http://www.pathwaystocollege.net)., and *Student Success: Statewide P-16 Systems*, SHEEO, 2003. [www.sheeo.org](http://www.sheeo.org).
- <sup>13</sup> As Donald Stokes demonstrated in Pasteur's Quadrant, research for fundamental understanding and practical application are not irreconcilable opposites, but complementary goals. Donald E. Stokes, *Pasteur's Quadrant: Basic Science and Technological Innovation*. Brookings Institution Press: Washington, DC. 1997.
- <sup>14</sup> Ernest Boyer, *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professorship*, Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (Jossey-Bass, 1990).
- <sup>15</sup> *Who Benefits? Who Pays?* A landmark study sponsored by the Carnegie Corporation in 1973 articulates the philosophical bases for different tuition and student assistance policies. *Study of College Costs and Prices, 1988-89 to 1997-98*, a congressionally-mandated study on college costs published by NCES, analyzed the factors which tend to produce cost increases in higher education. Its authors are: Alisa F. Cunningham, Jane V. Wellman, Melissa E. Clinedinst, and Jamie Merisotis of the Institute for Higher Education Policy.
- <sup>16</sup> Joseph Burke and his colleagues at the Rockefeller Institute have identified the strengths and limits of state level performance funding after examining numerous state experiments. . . . In *Achieving Accountability in Higher Education: Balancing Public, Academic, and Market Demands* (Jossey-Bass, 2004), he encourages the implementation of these principles at the institutional level. [See sidebar on page 31.]



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