

STATES, SCHOOLS, AND COLLEGES

Policies to Improve Student Readiness for College and Strengthen Coordination Between Schools and Colleges

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Introduction

Patrick M. Callan

For the United States, the imperative to improve college completion rates for students and to raise the level of education attained by most Americans is now widely accepted. The economic and demographic forces that are changing the face of America, the reconfiguration of labor markets in this country, and the intense educational and economic competition internationally all point to the need for the nation and the states to produce more Americans with college-level knowledge and skills. While college access remains a problem for many Americans, high school graduates now enroll in post-secondary education at historically unprecedented rates. Yet college completion, never a strength of American higher education, shows few improvements, and lags other nations; and the proportion of the population with certificates and degrees has remained flat.

One key component of any strategy to improve college completion and attainment must be to increase the numbers of young Americans who graduate from high school and enroll in higher education prepared to undertake college-level coursework. This requires educational policies that identify the knowledge and skills needed for college, and that assure that they are understood and taught across states. This includes implementing and institutionalizing associated performance standards in curricula, assessment programs, pre- and in-service teacher training programs, and the examinations administered to entering college students for placement. The challenge is to develop systemic approaches to collaboration and coordination of schools and colleges in every state.

In an era when most students who leave high school enroll in postsecondary education, what is needed is a focus on the continuity of the students' educational experiences from school through college, along with greater emphasis on student achievement and the completion of educational programs. The states must play an enabling role in leadership and support to achieve changes of this magnitude—a reality that has been recognized by many state and educational leaders. But this is largely uncharted territory, and finding the appropriate path has required trial and error.

The chapters that follow take stock of much of what has been tried and learned about state policy leadership in bridging the divide between K–12 schools and postsecondary education. They bring together the work and perspectives of the authors and of several sponsoring and collaborating organizations, including: Editorial Projects in Education and *Education Week*; the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB); the Institute for Higher Education Leadership & Policy at California State University,

Sacramento; and the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education. The National Center is publishing this report to stimulate and encourage examination of the effectiveness of state policies in linking high schools and colleges, in the interest of attaining higher levels of student achievement.

PART I

A National Perspective

Chapter One

The Historical Context of the Divide Between K–12 and Higher Education

Michael W. Kirst and Michael D. Usdan

In recent years, the deeply-embedded chasm that separates K–12 from postsecondary education in the United States has received unprecedented attention. Major foundations such as the Lumina Foundation, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and the Carnegie Corporation, influential governmental organizations such as the National Governors Association, and important entities such as the Southern Regional Education Board, Achieve, and Education Trust have focused national efforts on bridging the dysfunctional divide that exists between the educational levels.

While it is encouraging that this salient issue is receiving attention, it is far from clear that the work being completed will be more effective than past efforts in the states in building student transitions from high school to college. This is not to say that the efforts ought not be taken, for they should be, and more as well. We are suggesting, rather, that they be understood in historical context, so as to move beyond the historical barriers to K–16 reform that are so powerfully entrenched.

This historical review, as well as examining the barriers to K–16 articulation, seeks to offer insights into the possibilities for improved inter-level integration. We will examine the K–16 dichotomy through the following major developments that have helped to cement the divide between K–12 schools and higher education in the United States:

- Disjointed curricula for grades 10 to 14;
- The evolution of teacher preparation programs;
- The detachment of community colleges from high schools;
- Divided governance and finance; and
- A lack of inter-level organizational relationships.

In the final sections of this chapter, we summarize some state efforts to coordinate across sectors before offering our concluding thoughts about lessons to draw from this historical analysis. The authors also address these issues in a chapter of *Minding the Gap* (Kirst and Usdan 2007).

DISJOINTED CURRICULA FOR GRADES 10 TO 14

The origin of the divide between K–12 and postsecondary education in the United States stems, in part, from the laudable way the nation created education systems to deliver curricula for both K–12 and higher education. In the late 1800s there were no common standards for college admission, nor was there an organized national system for college entrance examinations. Nearly half the colleges had either low entrance requirements or none at all (Ravitch 2000, p. 41). Some colleges accepted students from preapproved secondary schools or used their own exams. High school educators wanted a more uniform and less haphazard system.

Within this context, the National Education Association in 1892 appointed the nation’s first blue ribbon education commission to recommend academic standards for secondary schools. The commission included five college presidents, a college professor, the U.S. Commissioner of Education, as well as other members (Ravitch 2000). This “Committee of Ten” was chaired by Charles W. Eliot, president of Harvard University.

The committee envisioned that only a tiny proportion of high school graduates would be going on to college, but its report recommended that all pupils be prepared for any path in life by “melding the objectives of liberal education (that is, a curriculum of rich content) and mental discipline (that is, the training of the mind)” (Ravitch 2003, p. 43). In support of this recommendation, the Committee of Ten proposed that high schools add to their curricula subjects such as history, the sciences, and classical languages (for example, Latin). The committee also proposed that these courses, in order to make them more accessible to larger numbers of students, be taught through active learning instead of memorization. The report was attacked for its support of an academic education for all students, and some critics praised the European approach of different schools based on career choices of pre-teens. Nonetheless, the Committee of Ten’s report influenced education policy and led to the development of the College Entrance Examination Board (now the College Board), with its common college examination.

During this period, U.S. colleges and universities played an important role in influencing high school curricula. In 1900, for example, the College Entrance Examination Board established uniform standards for each academic subject and issued a syllabus to help high school students prepare for college entrance subject-matter examinations. Soon thereafter, the University of California began to accredit high schools to ensure that their curricula were adequate for university preparation. As the number of high schools grew rapidly, however, the university could no longer meet the need for high school accreditation, and had to stop performing this function. Eventually, as the number of postsecondary institutions expanded greatly, the regional high school accrediting associations split with the higher education accreditation associations, in order to lessen the workload. This division also deemphasized K–16 alignment.

By 1918, a new report, “Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education,” offered a very different vision from that of the Committee of Ten. At this time, high school enrollments were expanding and many students were viewed as incapable of learning the traditional academic curriculum (Tyack and Cuban 1995). The Cardinal Principles were envisioned as a blueprint for supporting social efficiency through differentiated high school curricula. The report proposed that high schools provide, as well as academic preparation for some students, vocational training and courses on family life, good health, citizenship, ethical character, and the worthy use of leisure. Students were given intelligence tests to place them in the appropriate academic track. The overall purpose of the expanded and differentiated curricula was to retain broader numbers of secondary students in high school, and help them adapt more effectively to a changing society.

In many ways, this influential report helped to spawn the development of comprehensive high schools, which are designed to address many—often conflicting—educational purposes, while offering high-quality college preparation only to a minority of students in a track of challenging courses (that now feature Advanced Placement and honors classes). As traditional academic subjects and pedagogy were being deemphasized in high schools, course offerings multiplied to provide subjects that were designed to be more practical and engaging for large numbers of students; but this has led to the creation of shopping mall high schools that lack curricular coherence (Powell, Farrar, and Cohen 1985).

In the years after World War II, the notion of academic standards shared across K–12 schools and higher education vanished. “Aptitude” tests like the SAT replaced subject-matter standards for college admission, and secondary schools placed more emphasis on elective courses in nonacademic areas. As early as the 1950s, national groups began trying to push the high school curriculum closer to the vision of the 1893 Committee of Ten, with only mixed results (Kirst and Venezia 2004). Over time, the chasm between secondary and postsecondary education in the United States has grown greater than that in many other industrialized nations (Clark 1985).

Today, K–12 teachers and college faculty may belong to the same discipline-based professional organizations, but they rarely meet to discuss curricular alignment. Policymakers in the K–12 and higher education sectors cross paths even less frequently. It was not until 1982 that the Carnegie Foundation organized the first national meeting ever held between K–12 state school superintendents and college presidents to discuss the growing chasm between them (Stocking 1985, p. 258). Many groups mediate between high schools and colleges, but they have competing agendas that tend to work against curricular alignment. The number and influence of mediating groups, such as the College Board, Educational Testing Service, and American College Testing Program (ACT), is, according to Stocking, an indicator of the “amount of disorder and confusion that has grown through the years in the relationship between the school and the university in America” (p. 263).

Over the past decades, the Advanced Placement (AP) program has been the nationally aligned standards effort between K–12 and higher education—but the program is a stalactite that extends down to K–12 schools from universities, which dictate the course syllabus and exam. The International Baccalaureate (IB) program attempts to align high school and college curricula, but its scope is limited. These programs help those who attend selective colleges and universities, but not the 80% of high school students who attend nonselective or open-access institutions, such as community and technical colleges. In many high schools, there is a chasm between the academic rigor of AP and IB programs on the one hand, and regular college preparation courses on the other. In addition, some of the fastest growing courses in high school are college courses such as AP—while some of the fastest growing courses in college are remedial education classes. This disparity suggests that the better high school students are becoming more closely aligned with higher education through AP and IB, while the students who are less academically advanced are becoming more disconnected.

Beyond the AP and IB programs, there were until very recently no major efforts to provide curricular coherence and sequencing across secondary schools in the United States (Conley 2005). The National Governors Association and the K–12 Council of Chief State School Officers, however, with the support of Achieve, are currently developing common core standards for college preparedness. But there has been no traction in conceiving postsecondary liberal education in a way that relates the academic content of the secondary schools to the first two years of college. Instead, students face an eclectic academic muddle during their high school years and first years of college (grades 10 to 14), until they select a college major (Orrill 2000).

Thus, the high school curriculum remains unmoored from the freshman and sophomore college curriculum—and disconnected from a consistent vision of liberal arts education that would help students prepare for college coursework. For example, in California high schools, “literature” is the focus of English coursework for those students preparing for college. In community colleges, however, the initial English courses focus on grammar and writing. Meanwhile, the University of California and California State University emphasize rhetoric.

National policymaking for K–12 and postsecondary education has been more concerned with increasing access to college than with developing aligned, rigorous curricula that can better prepare large numbers of students for success at the college level. Access, rather than preparation, is also the theme of many of the professionals who mediate between the high schools and the colleges: high school counselors, college recruiters, and college admissions and financial aid officers. Improving educational opportunity requires both access and better preparation, so that students gain the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in college and earn their certificates or degrees.

TEACHER PREPARATION AS A FUNCTION OF MULTIPURPOSE UNIVERSITIES

The development of teacher preparation programs as a function of large, multipurpose universities has also played an important role in the evolution of the disjuncture between K–12 schools and higher education.

In the United States, the first widespread teacher preparation programs for prospective elementary teachers were called normal schools, which were two-year postsecondary institutions. The schools were called “normal” because they sought to establish norms or models—that is, they sought to develop and communicate common standards for teaching. In 1910, there were 264 normal schools enrolling 132,000 students in the United States (Dunham 1969). Later in the 20th century, many normal schools were transformed into teachers colleges, partly to better accommodate the preparation of secondary teachers as well as elementary teachers. Normal schools and teachers colleges had many links to K–12 schools, and interactions among those working at elementary, secondary, and postsecondary levels were frequent.

As demands for undergraduate education increased, however, teachers colleges expanded, both in function and enrollment, and became multipurpose state colleges or universities. At first, these campuses were often governed, like normal schools, by K–12 state boards of education. Their expansion required the recruitment of a wide variety of arts and sciences professors, who typically sought traditional forms of academic prestige characteristic to research universities rather than to colleges devoted to teaching. The preparation of teachers at these state universities was separated from other undergraduate teaching functions through the creation of schools or departments of education. These education departments, which originally had been the central reason for the institution’s existence, were typically viewed by the colleges’ other faculty members as having low academic prestige. In addition, these broader colleges and universities placed a low priority on linkages with K–12 teachers and students—so that typically, the only interactions with K–12 educators were through the school of education, and even these interactions declined.

Western Michigan University provides an example of this institutional evolution. Founded in 1903 as a normal school, it became Western State Teachers College in 1927, Western Michigan College of Education in 1941, and then Western Michigan University in 1957. Its first doctoral degrees were conferred in 1968, and the university had 18,500 students and 900 faculty members in 1969 (Dunham 1969).

One effect of these trends is that many former normal schools have become broad-access colleges and universities. These institutions typically admit all qualified applicants, but use placement assessments to preserve standards. That is, first-year students take placement tests to determine if they are prepared to take credit-bearing courses. Most high school students know that it is easy to get in to these colleges, but they typically know little about placement tests and the curricular demands of college-

level academic work (Kirst and Venezia 2004). An historical irony of this evolution of teacher preparation programs is that normal schools—those postsecondary institutions established to prepare teachers to follow standards—no longer communicate their own standards to K–12 teachers or students at all.

THE DETACHMENT OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES FROM HIGH SCHOOLS

As the numbers of high school and college students increased rapidly during the Baby Boom generation, many states developed community or junior college systems to accommodate the increased demand for higher education. Between 1950 and 1970, the number of community colleges more than doubled and enrollment increased from 217,000 to 1,630,000. Between 1969 and 1974, community college enrollment increased by 174%, compared with 47% for four-year institutions (Callan 1997).

Today, over 45% of undergraduates in the United States attend a community college, an increase of 10% in the last decade (Marcus 2005). The percentage attending community colleges has been increasing primarily because many of the fast-growing states—such as California, Texas, and Florida—rely heavily on community colleges. California, for example, enrolls two-thirds of its college freshmen in the community college system (Hayward, Jones, McGuinness, and Timar 2004).

Originally, community colleges were funded like public schools with mostly local support, state supplements, and no tuition. In California, for example, community colleges originated as part of the local K–12 system and were considered the 13th and 14th grades. During the 1950s, as community colleges began to expand across the nation, they also began to be given their own local governing boards separate from the K–12 system. For some community colleges, however, four-year college and university systems dictated large parts of their curricula for transfer students (Callan 1997).

Much as teachers colleges moved away from K–12 education, community colleges have distanced themselves from secondary schools as well (Brint and Karabel 1989). As community colleges sought to maintain growth during and after the Baby Boom generation, they expanded their mission to include vocational education and community service. New and neglected populations beyond recent high school graduates were added, including housewives, immigrants, older adults, and laid-off industrial workers. As the community colleges focused increasingly on the needs of these new students, there was an accompanying loss of interaction with and focus on high schools. As a result, community colleges sent fewer and less clear signals to high school students about the academic preparation and skills needed to earn college credits toward their vocational certificates or associate degrees.

The impact of this detachment from secondary education has been profound, with many students entering community college unprepared for its demands. For example, 95% of first-time students enrolled in Baltimore City Community Colleges (BCCC) in

fall 2000 required remediation in math, English, and reading. Nationally, about 60% of students entering community colleges require remediation, which is a major risk factor for not completing a degree or certificate program (Adelman 1999). Of all the English and math courses offered at community colleges, 29% and 32%, respectively, are remedial (Cohen and Brawer 2003). The majority of students enrolled in these remedial courses (60%) are of traditional college age and enter college directly after high school. This suggests that the high level of remediation is not simply a result of having to refresh the skills of those who have been out of school for a while, but also of having to teach skills that were not received in high school. Increasingly, four-year institutions transfer their remediation to community colleges. At least ten states discourage four-year universities from offering remedial education by not providing state funding for such purposes (Jenkins and Boswell 2002).

Compounding this remediation problem is the fact that many community college students today, compared with their peers at four-year institutions, are less likely to have the information and preparation they need to succeed in college. Community colleges serve a large proportion of low-income, ethnic minority, and first-generation college students. According to Stanford University's Bridge Project, these student populations are less likely to receive college counseling, be placed in college-preparation courses, and obtain information about college admissions and placement (Kirst and Venezia 2004).

The lack of college preparation and information possessed by students entering community college is reflected in low transfer and degree-completion rates. Although 71% of beginning community college students plan to obtain a bachelor's degree, only about 25% transfer to a four-year school (Bradburn and Hurst 2001). Several studies demonstrate that students who enter community colleges and seek a four-year degree have much lower completion rates than students who initially enroll in a four-year college or university (Fry 2004; Cabrera et al. 2005). Whereas 63% of students attending a four-year institution earn a bachelor's degree, only 18% of those who begin at a community college do so (Wellman 2002).

Despite low transfer and completion rates, community colleges continue to be an attractive option because of their low enrollment fees, close proximity to students' homes, and "open door" policies that admit students with few entrance standards. Unfortunately, students often mistake the "open door" policy to mean that the college has few academic standards. Many high school students believe that once they enroll in a community college, they are free to take any entry-level credit-bearing courses they choose (Rosenbaum 2001). However, most community colleges use assessments to place students in course levels in core subject areas. The Bridge Project found that most high school students going to community colleges were unaware of college placement standards, and thought that their minimal high school graduation standards were adequate preparation for college (Kirst, Venezia, and Antonio 2004).

Many high school students view community colleges as souped-up high schools, and most do not even learn that they need to take a placement exam until they enter the community college (Kirst and Venezia 2004; Bueschel 2004). High school counseling for prospective community college students is particularly weak. Students typically are not told that their level of high school achievement will affect the amount of time it will take to finish transfer requirements, thus decreasing their chances of completing college.

Meanwhile, community colleges, which must align their courses to meet the transfer standards of four-year institutions, have distanced themselves from K–12 schools, despite the prevalence of remedial education on their campuses (McGrath and Spear 1991). In addition, most state data systems remain separate for each level and do not examine the flow of students across K–14. With respect to communicating with high schools about effective academic preparation of students, the colleges that are closest to high school students generally have stepped far away from them—as far away as any four-year college or university.

DIVIDED GOVERNANCE AND FINANCE

Statewide agencies and coordinating bodies that govern educational functions within states have evolved along with the educational institutions themselves. As public colleges and universities grew dramatically from the end of World War II to 1980, the need for increased statewide coordination became a priority. In response to this need, many states created new statewide coordinating or planning boards for higher education. For example, in 1940 the majority of states did not have a higher education governing, coordinating, or planning agency with responsibility for all public higher education. By 1979, all states had such an agency (Richardson et al. 1999). In 1940, 70% of public campuses had their own governing board, but by 1976, only 30% did.

During this reorganization of higher education governance, many states developed community or junior college systems, often with their own governance mechanisms. Others developed multiple branch campuses of major public universities, which in some cases involved shifting the governance structures of the former normal schools from K–12 state boards of education to higher education governance systems. One result was large variation in state higher education governance across the United States. For example, some states, such as California, have multiple statewide systems of higher education (California has a separate board for its research universities, its state universities that generally do not offer doctoral degrees, and its community college system). Other states, such as Georgia, have a single Board of Regents governing community colleges through research universities.

Despite the variation in the new higher education governance mechanisms, there was one constant: These agencies sought to coordinate the functions of higher education

statewide, but they were not linked with K–12 governance or policymaking.¹ As regulations of K–12 schools and higher education expanded from 1960 to 1980, the new higher education state agencies operated largely in isolation from their K–12 counterparts. As Richardson, Bracco, Callan, and Finney (1999) state, “A 1969 study of 12 large states found little political or budget conflict between K–12 and postsecondary education. The two levels basically ignored each other and proceeded in their separate ways” (p. 9).

Similarly, finance and oversight of education by state legislatures also evolved primarily in two separate spheres, one for K–12 and another for postsecondary education. Although the history and context of each state’s funding stream for education is unique, funding for K–12 schools and for postsecondary education has derived—or seemed to derive—from different sources. Schools have been funded primarily through property taxes, whereas financing for higher education has come from a variety of fees and charges (such as tuition), federal grants, gifts, and appropriations from state general funds. When finance and budget levels are under consideration by state legislatures for the two educational sectors, they typically have been handled separately.

Likewise, the structure of state legislative committees responsible for education varies across states, but the development of legislation has typically evolved separately for K–12 and higher education. Many state legislatures, such as Georgia and New York, have separate subcommittees to handle K–12 and higher education issues. Other states, such as Oregon and Florida, have committees that oversee both sectors. Particularly in Florida, which has recently created some K–20 committees, it will be important to examine the extent to which their committee structure can help to drive cooperation across the sectors. In general, however, legislatures have approached K–12 schools and higher education as completely different spheres. Consequently, state policies are inadequate to hold K–12 and postsecondary education accountable for college readiness. No powerful interest groups exist on the scene between K–12 and postsecondary education to enhance the success of students as they transit from school to college.

INTER-LEVEL RELATIONSHIPS VIRTUALLY NONEXISTENT

In examining the organizational relationships as well as the governance structures that have evolved, the findings of a 1969 study called *Education and State Politics* are useful in illuminating the historical nature of the divide between K–12 and higher education. Given the rapid growth in enrollments and the changes that were emerging, the authors

¹ The New York Board of Regents, created long before this in 1784, provides an exception in being responsible for K–16 education. See “The New York Regents” later in this chapter for more information. Another exception is the Idaho Board of Education, which has overall responsibility over higher education institutions, as well as public and community colleges.

sought to understand the ways that conflict or cooperation between K–12 schools and colleges and universities appeared to be taking shape (Usdan, Minar, and Hurwitz 1969).

In most cases in the 12 states studied, the authors found that areas of coordination or disagreement between K–12 and postsecondary education were virtually nonexistent. Open political conflict between the sectors of education was scarcely noted on any broad scale in any state, though in a few instances there was some friction over specific regional or local issues. To the extent that there was cooperation between sectors, it tended to be ad hoc and focused upon special events or functions. Only a handful of efforts were being made to institutionalize any relationships across the levels within state policy structures or processes.

Most respondents in 1967² tended to see education as discrete batches of K–12 and postsecondary issues that were only accidentally connected to one another and that were therefore best handled separately. Little thought was given to relations between the levels of education. For example, when asked four decades ago about the future of educational finance in the states or the prospects for expanded vocational-technical education, many respondents were generally aware of the ways that these issues spanned K–12 and postsecondary education. However, in relation to solving common issues such as these, they pointed to political difficulties and lack of stakeholder interest in proactively seeking methods to improve inter-level coordination. However tangible the problems that spanned the two levels, they tended to be addressed as isolated events rather than as parts of a broad pattern of issues.

Emergent Areas of Inter-Level Relationships in 1967

Nonetheless, the study found that three sources of social pressure were bringing some attention to the divide between K–12 and postsecondary education. One was the expanding cost of education at all levels, which was the result of population growth, heightened aspirations, new technologies, and generally mounting prices. A second was the tendency during the 1960s to question all established forms and procedures, including educational bureaucracies and systems. A third pressure was a rising demand for educational services that extend beyond high school but do not include a baccalaureate degree—that is, grades 13 and 14. This last factor was related to the need for new occupational skills for new and existing workers, the availability of more leisure time among housewives and others, and delays in finding jobs among young people.

The authors also identified the following emerging areas of interest in relation to the divide between K–12 and postsecondary education: potential conflicts over educational finance, contested control of grades 13 and 14, and a lack of responsibility for career and technical education.

² The study was conducted in 1967 and published in 1969.

Potential Conflicts over Educational Finance

At the time of the study, there were minimal disputes between K–12 schools and higher education over finance. This was partly because state legislative processes for making budgetary decisions were separate for the two sectors, and partly because of the luxury of the boom years of the post–World War II period, when the United States enjoyed unprecedented economic hegemony. Nonetheless, *Education and State Politics* emphasized that educational finance was the most important area of potential conflict between K–12 schools and higher education.

The fiscal challenges that faced education in the late 1960s, of course, are different from those today. During that decade, education leaders and policymakers needed to accommodate large increases in enrollments during a time of prosperity; today, states have similar needs to increase the educational attainment of their residents, yet they are facing the worst fiscal crisis since the Great Depression and serving much broader student populations, in terms of ethnicity, income, English language ability, and age. In these conditions, the long-prevalent arrangement—under which finances for the two sectors are considered in isolation of each other—will be under growing pressure, both from increased demands for funds and from dissatisfaction with the adequacy of revenue sources to meet those demands. For example, as the movement for property tax abatement has grown and persisted for several decades, most states have periodically revised school revenue formulas and drawn more support for K–12 education from their state general funds—which also support state appropriations to public colleges and universities. From 1989 to 2009, state funding has been reduced more severely for higher education than for K–12 education. Almost a half century ago, in the hopes of increasing collaboration among K–12 schools and higher education, *Education and State Politics* alluded to the need to create new coordinative structures across K–16 to screen and reconcile claims on the state treasury. This alternative, needless to say, has gained little or no traction.

Contested Control of Grades 13 and 14

A second issue identified in *Education and State Politics* as a potential area of conflict in inter-level relations was the control and orientation of education in the 13th and 14th grades. Three general patterns had evolved in the 12 states studied. Some states developed community or junior college systems; some invested in branch campuses of state universities; and some used a combination of the two or had not settled on an approach. Today, many states still do not appear to have a systematic approach for handling the first two years of postsecondary education.

Even in those states that have developed a coherent plan for grades 13 and 14, there have been some continuing controversies between K–12 and higher education stakeholders. In California, for example, junior colleges were originally part of K–12 school districts, but state policy later declared community colleges to be a part of the

higher education system—and the community colleges have distanced themselves from secondary education. As the rapid expansion of community colleges continues and their importance to the nation’s economy becomes more visible, the possibilities for inter-level conflict remain alive in many states—and the evidence of cooperation is primarily localized.

In addition, in most states there is not a cohesive voice articulating and addressing the needs of students in grades 13 and 14. Even in those states with strong community college systems, the community colleges have rarely developed consistency and solidity among themselves. Their staffs have tended to divide between those with an orientation to local and vocational community services and those oriented to the academic transfer function. They also tend to be divided between those who favor state finance and control and those who wish to see local control predominant. As a result, it has been difficult historically for community colleges to present a coherent policy agenda to the state legislature and governor. This is not to say that community colleges do not have political power, for their mission has a wide and practical appeal among legislators, the private sector, and local constituents. *Education and State Politics* speculated decades ago that the community colleges may well gain sufficient identity to make themselves a “third force” in educational politics. But these colleges still seem—despite their huge enrollments and increased visibility—to be some distance from achieving the status and leverage commensurate with their potential or size.

Lack of Responsibility for Career and Technical Education

In contrast to finding areas of engagement in grades 13 and 14, the authors of *Education and State Politics* found a void in leadership in both K–12 and higher education for career and technical education. Despite the obvious social and economic importance of vocational education over the past decades, historically it has not been a central educational priority for either of the two levels of education.

In the states, statewide departments of education have tended to oversee career and technical education, with local programs offered in secondary schools, community colleges, state colleges, and, in some cases, special technical schools. In general, four-year institutions have displayed little interest in career-technical training, as distinct from professional training. Meanwhile, the diversity of the community college mission—spanning from community issues to academic transfer—combined with scarcity of resources, has diluted these colleges’ ability to address vocational training issues. Likewise, the high schools, with their comprehensive missions, have had difficulty addressing the needs of career and technical education, particularly in maintaining industry standards during periods of budget restraint. Except in the agriculture field, historically there has not been much organized interest in promoting technical programs across K–16 education. Much of the impetus has been supplied by federal grant-in-aid funding.

Historically, the result has been a no-man's land of educational politics and policies for career and technical education. There has been a lack of responsibility within states for programs that span K–12 and higher education. Generally speaking, articulated technical programs between K–12 schools and community colleges continue to suffer from lack of coherent direction and commitment despite the emergence of STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) and other national initiatives. Career and technical programs in secondary schools are rarely linked to postsecondary education in terms of credits or articulated instruction. Federal initiatives like “Tech-Prep” have not made much difference in adding coherence.

Some attribute the historical confusion to decades of federal bureaucratic intervention. The issue of global economic competitiveness and the current fiscal downturn may finally trigger the emergence of technical education as a national and state priority. But without an accountability structure or way to develop and finance programs more consistently between K–12 schools and higher education, it is not clear that prioritizing the issue will resolve the challenges faced by existing career and technical programs.

Potential for New Inter-Level Relationships

The findings from *Education and State Politics* conducted over four decades ago remain distressingly germane to the contemporary situation regarding organizational relationships between K–12 and postsecondary education. In a world in which social, technological, economic, and demographic change has been the only constant, fundamental educational governance structures remain bifurcated, ossified, and seemingly immune from transformation. In essence, 40 years of profound and transformational history have passed with little change in governance structures or patterns of operation.

During this period, however, there have been many important attempts to improve coordination across K–12 and higher education. In 1969, *Education and State Politics* identified three particular organizational structures: those that governed elementary-secondary education, those that governed higher education, and those that have evolved to bridge the two. At that time, coordinating bodies designed to bridge the levels of education were rare and varied substantially in function and structure from state to state. With one exception, the New York Board of Regents, they were recent creations and for the most part proved to be ephemeral and ad hoc, with limited staying power. As a result, their effectiveness was extremely difficult to gauge. Except in studying the New York Regents, the study authors did not have an historical basis for examining the effectiveness of these coordinating bodies. However, the authors recognized that these bodies were important and suggested that overall K–16 coordinating mechanisms might help to increase cooperation and reduce conflicts between K–12 and postsecondary education. Over the past few years, a number of states have experimented with the development of

K–16 coordinating bodies; the next section summarizes several efforts, many of which have been spurred by funding from the Gates Foundation. The recent burgeoning of state-level K–16 councils, as we will discuss shortly, reflects the continuing and even more urgent contemporary need for inter-level coordinating mechanisms.

STATE EFFORTS TO COORDINATE ACROSS SECTORS

In examining state efforts to coordinate education from kindergarten to postsecondary education, it is useful to begin with the most far-reaching education policy structure in the United States—the New York Board of Regents. After providing a summary of the evolution of the Regents, we examine other state efforts beginning in the 1970s.

New York Board of Regents

The New York Board of Regents was created in 1784 to provide K–16 integration, and it is the broadest educational governance body in the nation. The Regents’ scope of authority includes elementary, secondary, and higher education, both public and private; the licensed professions, including medicine, nursing, law, and accounting; libraries, museums, historical societies; and public television and radio stations. Regents are selected by the state Legislature for five-year terms, with each legislator having one vote. Consequently, the Regents are not an integral part of the governor’s executive branch and lack independent fiscal powers. The selection of Regents through the Legislature provides some political insulation for the body, but also a remoteness and inaccessibility from the rest of state government. In many ways, the Regents are a fourth branch of New York State government.

The creation of the State University of New York (SUNY) system in the late 1940s led to a dramatic decline in the Regents’ attention to, and impact on, higher education. All colleges and universities outside the City University of New York (CUNY) system in New York City—public, nonprofit independent, and for-profit proprietary—are members of the SUNY system; SUNY has dominant budget authority over the state’s public higher education appropriations. Every eight years, the Regents develop a Higher Education Plan that is subject to the governor’s approval, but the plan did not link CUNY and SUNY effectively—and lately the Regents have not been viewed as a K–16 policy entity that connects K–12 schools and postsecondary education (Bracco and Sanchez-Penley 1997).

Even with its disproportionate focus on K–12 issues, the Board of Regents has retained one mechanism that aligns secondary and postsecondary education: the New York Regents Exams. When these high school end-of-course-based exams were first developed in the 19th century, student scores were a factor in university admission and financial aid eligibility. Over time, however, as New York’s student financial aid became need-based, and as the independence of the SUNY system increased, the exams were

used less frequently for SUNY admissions. The purpose of the Exams evolved to certifying minimum standards for high school completion. Currently, SUNY uses the SAT instead of the Regents Exams as an admissions factor, but the Regents Exams still provide high school students across New York State with information about academic content standards for postsecondary education. For example, Regents Exams include essays and open-ended questions that are closer than multiple-choice exams to requiring college-level standards of academic work. In addition, Regents' syllabi provide a college- and university-oriented underpinning to high school course content throughout the state. Moreover, CUNY uses the K–12 Regents Exams as its own admission exam, a policy that can reduce remediation by sending clear signals about college standards to high school students. One important lesson from New York's experience is that a consolidated K–16 governance structure can help align K–16 academic content standards.

Other State Efforts to Coordinate K–16 Education

In the 1970s, several states, including Idaho, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, and Virginia, tried to connect K–12 and postsecondary education through the creation of governor-appointed secretaries of education responsible for both levels. The positions were created with the expectation that centralized, state-level leadership for K–12 and higher education could better coordinate and integrate education policy, including such areas as teacher education. After almost three decades, however, none of these states' K–16 system goals and policies are as aligned as they were originally intended to be. For example, note the following disconnected current policies in states that have attempted to coordinate governance through secretaries of education:

- In Idaho, strong public concern for the quality of K–12 education monopolized the attention of the secretary of education and Board of Education, which led to greater independence and less scrutiny of higher education.
- In Massachusetts, higher education leaders increased academic requirements and decreased remedial courses at public colleges—without significant involvement of the secretary of education or K–12 educators.
- In Pennsylvania, student performance on the high school exit exam does not relate to any postsecondary standards. Tying performance on these exams to postsecondary admissions and/or placement can help address students' low motivation to perform well, as well as providing clearer signals to students about the skills needed for college-level academic work.
- In Virginia, compulsory 11th grade end-of-course exams contained relevant content to assess higher education readiness, but there has been no serious discussion of using Virginia's K–12 standards of learning for postsecondary admission or placement.

In the wake of the failure of attempts to integrate the sectors through imposed systemic reform in the 1970s, several states established more voluntary structures in the 1990s to improve collaboration among K–12 and postsecondary institutions and stakeholders. These initiatives have made some incremental progress, and some of the most ambitious of these efforts are the Maryland and Georgia P–16 councils (Kirst and Venezia 2004). The goal of these councils is to transform the ways in which schools and colleges operate, not just to add new programs or initiatives. While still evolving, Maryland and Georgia’s P–16 councils have put much more effort into improving teacher education than improving student pathways from secondary to postsecondary education. Recently, however, the Georgia council began developing academic content standards for the first two years of college that are linked to the state’s K–12 standards.

While it is too early to reach a final verdict on the effectiveness of voluntary alliances, there are two major questions that arise, one concerning sustainability and the other impact. First, can these voluntary structures survive the statewide leaders who created them, when they depend for longevity on the commitment of the next generation of leaders from both levels of education? Both the Georgia and Maryland councils changed their focus and structure after new governors were elected. Second, can ad hoc, voluntarily adopted approaches lead to institutional changes that will improve rates of postsecondary success? Richardson et al. raise the essential issue about whether governance structures will be effective apart from specific leaders:

Certainly, leaders matters, but even good leaders should not be expected to achieve consistent results in the presence of a system design that inhibits institutional collaboration and system synergy. Leadership can make a system perform better or worse than its structural design, but it cannot compensate for badly designed systems or mismatched policy environments (Richardson et al. 1999, p. 17).

Over the past two decades, states have also experimented with other ways to coordinate K–12 and higher education, including through legislation. For example, in Florida the Legislature passed a bill which the governor signed into law in 1999 that sought to establish a “unified, seamless K–20 education system” in the state. This included creating a new, single, statewide K–20 Board of Education with broad authority that reached far beyond voluntary efforts. Meanwhile, a restructured state Department of Education has been implementing a unified K–20 accountability system, and the state has integrated its extensive student-unit record systems for K–12 and postsecondary education. There is some evidence that these changes in state governance and information sharing may be improving policy analysis in the state. Using centralized student-unit records, the state board identified school districts where a disproportionately low number of students were enrolling in the state’s four-year colleges or were needing remedial education upon enrollment. The state analyzed high school and middle college course-

taking patterns and determined that students in these low-performing districts were not enrolling in a rigorous sequence of high school courses (Venezia et al. 2005).

It is too soon to know the results of these efforts in Florida—particularly their effects on educational performance over time. However, Florida’s experience and recent studies suggest that if K–16 coordinating councils (whether voluntary or otherwise) are to have impact over time, they need access not only to key leaders but also to several important state policy levers, including: alignment of curricula and assessments; fiscal incentives; linked data systems; and accountability that reaches across sectors (Callan et al. 2006).

The three case studies described later in this report—concerning P–16 and P–20 councils in Arizona, Kentucky, and Rhode Island—reveal that states are increasingly using a range of structures to try to improve the coordination of education between K–12 schools and higher education. Given the escalating efforts to develop state educational structures that span the junctures from preschool to college, it appears that many states are recognizing the deep and abiding problems of this historical divide. Unfortunately, the evolution of these governance structures leaves unanswered the question of what types of state and regional structures will enhance K–16 deliberations, interaction, policy integration, and student outcomes. So far, no state has yet found a lasting way to facilitate deep interactions and linkages between K–12 schools and higher education.

LESSONS FOR THE FUTURE

It is clear from this brief history that the divide between K–12 and higher education derives from long-lasting structural developments that are diverse and deep-rooted, and that continue to separate the education levels today. These developments include: disjointed curricula for grades 10 to 14; the evolution of teacher preparation programs; the detachment of community colleges from high schools; divided governance and finance; and inter-level relationships that were virtually nonexistent 40 years ago.

Over the past four decades, many states have sought to create better linkages across education from kindergarten to college. In many cases, state efforts at consolidated governance structures and voluntary alliances have been unfruitful. Even in those cases that have been more promising, vast divides remain between the education levels.

If governance alone cannot bridge the divide between K–12 and higher education, what can? Based on historical precedent, we should not expect change to be effected spontaneously from within education. The two educational levels have so little contact among faculty and administrators that substantive pressure to bridge the current divide is unlikely to derive from these sources. Even the development of K–16 governance and accountability mechanisms, such as in Florida, have not yet brought K–12 and postsecondary education together to create an aligned curriculum or integrated finance policies.

States' most promising approaches may be a combination of governance reform and better use of key state policy levers and incentives that reach across sectors, including curriculum alignment, fiscal incentives, linked data systems, and accountability. But there are substantial challenges in each of these areas. For example:

- **Alignment.** The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) law encourages states to develop K–12 assessments with low standards that do not link with the high-level skills needed for college. By having low-standards tests, some states hope that more students score higher, which can avoid federal/state interventions.
- **Finance.** State fiscal processes do not consider K–16 as one continuum, but rather as two distinct systems.
- **Data Systems.** Our historical legacy does not include longitudinal data systems in the states for tracking students across K–16, so it is difficult to measure progress.
- **Accountability.** Accountability systems are separate for K–12 and higher education, so there is not much historical encouragement for the systems to develop and implement K–16 policies.

As this history demonstrates, K–12 and postsecondary education are not natural allies in the work to improve student transitions between the sectors. The current disjuncture evolved through different historical paths, splintered governance structures, separate faculty and professional associations, and a variety of curriculum standards. P–16 councils have brought disparate K–12 and postsecondary partners together for initial useful deliberations, but in-depth policy impact and long-run sustainability remain challenging. The historical divide has created political constituencies that focus on each level rather than on what they can accomplish together.

In sum, the historical record is daunting when considering the prospects for success of P–16 councils. What is promising within this record, however, is the increased attention by states and national organizations, including foundations, to develop better linkages between K–12 schools and higher education. Whereas 40 years ago inter-level relationships in education were virtually nonexistent, there are now many local, regional, state, and national efforts to build K–16 transitions for students. As the states and nation find themselves in the midst of the worst fiscal crisis since the Great Depression, it is imperative that these efforts move beyond superficial discussions and engage education stakeholders in concrete inter-level reforms that can improve student readiness for college, student transitions into college, and college completion rates. Should some of these efforts succeed, the states can begin to write a new page in the educational history, one that is populated by students progressing through an integrated system spanning from preschool to higher education.

Chapter Two

**P–16 Policy Alignment in the States:
Findings from a 50-State Survey**

By Erin J. Walsh

Although the vast majority of high school students aspire to graduate from high school and earn a college degree, most will leave the educational pipeline before attaining a degree. Estimates suggest that about 69% of high school freshmen in the United States graduate from high school within four years (NCHEMS 2006a). Of high school graduates who enroll in college seeking a bachelor’s degree, about 56% earn that degree within six years. Of high school graduates enrolling in college to seek an associate’s degree, about 28% attain that degree within three years (NCHEMS 2007).

High remediation rates for students entering college indicate that many high school graduates are unprepared for college-level academic work. Data from the National Center for Education Statistics (Wirt et al. 2004) show that 61% of public two-year college students and 25% of four-year students complete at least one postsecondary-level remedial course. College graduation rates are significantly lower for students who take any remedial course (Wirt et al.).

Low college graduation rates and high remediation rates are indicators of a disjuncture between the K–12 and postsecondary education sectors. Kirst and Venezia (2001) found that students receive unclear signals from high schools, colleges, and state governments about how to prepare for college. For example:

- High school curricula and graduation standards usually do not match college admissions requirements;
- State K–12 and postsecondary budgets are typically separate;
- State data systems typically do not track students after high school graduation; and
- States are not held accountable for student progress and success across the divide from high school to college.

In a 2004 study, Kirst and Venezia continued to explore P–16 alignment by examining “policies, perceptions and practices related to the transition between high school and college” (p. 4) through case studies of six states. In their findings, the authors describe a system in which students aspire to attend college but are often confused by inconsistent signals about how to adequately prepare for college. Kirst and Bracco (2004)

conclude that the lack of clear P–16 policy signals hampers student readiness for and success in postsecondary education.

In *Claiming Common Ground*, the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education extends previous P–16 research by examining P–16 alignment from a state policy perspective (Callan et al. 2006). The authors present evidence demonstrating that standards for college readiness are confusing for students and that state and national reforms have not adequately addressed the need to align K–12 and postsecondary education. The authors identify four policy levers that states can use to improve college readiness:

- **Statewide data systems** involve each state’s ability to track individual students’ progress and course-taking throughout their educational careers and into the workforce.
- **Alignment of coursework and assessments** refers to the extent to which the curricula and tests in K–12 schools and in the first years of college are complementary with and connected to each other.
- **State finance** refers to the budgeting tools (such as cross-sector funding, funding for dual enrollment, and financial incentives for accountability) that states can use to improve P–16 collaboration.
- **Accountability** refers to how states report and hold institutions accountable for student progress and success from preschool through college.

Claiming Common Ground concludes by urging states to focus on these four policy areas to help K–12 and postsecondary education systems work together and improve students’ college readiness and success.

In examining P–16 efforts across the states, this chapter uses as a guiding framework the four state policy levers identified in *Claiming Common Ground*, as well as two additional themes that arose from the research: P–16 governance and public relations. The six thematic findings are based primarily on responses to a 50-state survey on P–16 councils of the State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO), which was conducted in 2007 by the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education.¹ After presenting findings related to these six thematic areas, this chapter offers additional findings and conclusions based on an analysis across the themes.

FINDING ONE: P–16 GOVERNANCE

State P–16 councils are becoming more prevalent, but a variety of obstacles limit the capacity of these councils to implement P–16 policies.

¹ For methodological information, please refer to “Methodological Notes” at the end of this chapter.

P–16 Governance Councils Provide a Forum for Alignment

As recently as 2001, most states lacked regular opportunities for P–12 and postsecondary policymakers to discuss P–16 alignment issues (Kirst and Venezia 2001). Today, however, most states report having forums that facilitate collaboration among P–12 and postsecondary policymakers. “Diplomas Count,” *Education Week*’s June 2008 publication on P–16 councils reports that 38 states have P–16 councils or governance structures that perform that role, with two states (Louisiana and Pennsylvania) having dual state-level councils or groups.

The structures, goals, participants, and frequency of meetings of P–16 councils vary across states. Many state P–16 councils are convened by the governor and typically, but not always, the state higher education executive officer is a member of the state P–16 council. In 18 states, the scope of the P–16 council addresses educational alignment from preschool to college and beyond (Diplomas Count 2008, p. 16). In addition, 19 councils report that they typically meet quarterly, although some councils meet “as needed” (Diplomas Count 2008).

Barriers to P–16 Governance

According to SHEEO survey responses, the most frequently reported obstacles that limit the capacity of P–16 councils are lack of resources, lack of policymaking ability, and difficulty collaborating across educational sectors.

In terms of resources needed by P–16 councils, the most common responses were money, staff, and the attention of key leaders. For example, when asked about the primary obstacle that the states’ P–16 council faced, one SHEEO reported that “funding has always been an issue,” another cited “resources, both human and financial,” and a third said, “The initiative could pursue its goals more aggressively if it had more resources.” A 2008 report published by the Education Commission of the States (Dounay) also finds that lack of financial and human resources hampers P–16 councils’ ability to accomplish their goals. The report provides examples of strategies that states have used to attempt to overcome these resource limitations.

A lack of policymaking authority at the state, district, and institution levels also poses a barrier to P–16 governance. For example, one SHEEO reported that, in seeking to implement improved policies, the state P–16 commission was limited to improving communication between school districts and universities. Another respondent explained, “The partnership has not been a policymaking body. Its results depended upon the entities to which the co-chairs are allied to embrace and carry the torch for the partnership goals,” including lobbying with the legislature.

In relation to this issue, several SHEEOs reported that the greatest obstacle to implementing P–16 policies in their states is the challenge of working across the P–12 and postsecondary sectors. One SHEEO said, “Working effectively in partnerships is not

a natural act.” Another said, “The purpose of the [P–16 initiative] is to bring people together to build a shared agenda. This is never easy.”

FINDING TWO: DATA SYSTEMS

The Data Quality Campaign (DQC) leads national efforts to develop state P–16 data systems—and states reported progress in developing such systems. However, barriers are limiting the states’ effectiveness, including challenges in creating a common student ID, privacy concerns, lack of funding for data systems, and difficulty in collaborating across educational sectors.

Data Quality Campaign Frames and Supports Creation of P–16 Data Systems

Spurred by the need for greater accountability in public education, many states have had P–12 data systems in place for years. In 2005, the Data Quality Campaign began working to coordinate the development of education data systems among states. The DQC evaluates state longitudinal educational data systems by measuring progress on ten elements they deem critical to creating effective data systems. The ten elements are: a unique statewide student identifier; student-level enrollment; demographic and program participation information; test-record tracking to measure academic growth; information on untested students; a teacher identifier system; student-level transcript information; student-level college readiness scores; student-level graduation and drop-out data; the ability to match student records between P–12 and postsecondary education; and a statewide data audit system.

According to the DQC website, in 2008, Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Louisiana, and Utah lead the nation in progress on data systems. These states reported having all of the DQC’s ten necessary elements for a complete P–16 data system. Forty-six states reported having at least half the necessary elements.

Barriers to Aligning Data Systems

Based on the SHEEO survey, states are using one data system to track individual student performance from preschool through high school and another system to track students in college. Few states combine these data systems to track students from preschool through college. For example, as one SHEEO said, “In the past three years, the [state department of higher education] has been able to obtain unit-specific data from all . . . [public] postsecondary systems and to establish a database by which data from each system can be linked to other systems. This data system does not link to either the P–12 or labor (wage based/unemployment) data systems.” Lack of funding may affect the production of a cross-sector education database. As one SHEEO explained, “The greatest barrier [to creating a comprehensive data system] is a lack of a statewide-funded mandate.”

Another obstacle to the development of a cross-sector data system is states' inability to create a cross-sector unique student identifier that would enable the tracking of individual students from preschool to college. In many states, the P–12 and postsecondary sectors use different identifiers for their students. For example, the state university system may identify students with a university ID number while the P–12 system uses the social security number. As one SHEEO reported, “The largest barrier we face is finding a way to identify students between the P–12 system and the higher education system.” Another SHEEO agreed, saying that the chief obstacle to creating a comprehensive data system is the “inability to track individual student performance across educational sectors.” It is important to note that private educational institutions (both P–12 and postsecondary) and the workforce sectors are typically not included in state data systems.

Concern about student privacy, particularly in relation to the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) is another frequently cited impediment to the creation of P–16 data systems. For example, one SHEEO reported, “The Department of Education has shown reluctance to using social security numbers to identify students.” Another said that “federal privacy regulations and FERPA remain the primary obstacles to successful implementation.” Some states, like Utah, have passed legislation permitting the creation of a common student identifier. The DQC website provides information and resources for states about how to address FERPA and privacy.

FINDING THREE: ALIGNMENT OF COURSEWORK AND ASSESSMENTS

States reported mixed progress in aligning high school coursework with postsecondary expectations. Achieve’s American Diploma Project leads curricular alignment efforts by framing and supporting states’ efforts in this area. States have made the greatest progress in aligning curricula in math and English. In relation to the alignment of assessments, the survey results did not indicate any predominant patterns.

Alignment of Coursework

Two primary themes emerged regarding the alignment of P–12 and postsecondary curricula. First, Achieve’s American Diploma Project (ADP) leads national efforts by framing and supporting the alignment of high school curricular requirements with postsecondary expectations. Through the project, Achieve works with 33 member states to advocate for the alignment of standards, graduation requirements, assessments, data systems, and accountability with the expectations of college and careers (Achieve 2008).

Second, the most frequently mentioned subject areas in which states are working to develop curricular alignment are math and English. More than half of SHEEOs surveyed indicated that their states receive support for creating math and English standards through their participation in the American Diploma Project. Survey

respondents frequently mentioned statewide progress in aligning curricula and standards in math and English.

Barriers to Aligning Coursework

In their survey responses, SHEEOs indicated that the process of collaborating between P–12 and postsecondary education poses the greatest challenge to aligning P–12 and postsecondary curricula. For example, one SHEEO said, “Spanning cultures between P–12 and higher education is always a challenge.” Another said, “Cross-sector alignment work is time-consuming and complicated and often outside individuals’ specific job assignments.”

Alignment of Assessments

States can use high school assessments to shape P–16 alignment in at least two ways. First, states can use high school achievement tests to predict students’ level of postsecondary preparedness for college and the workforce. Fewer than one-fifth of SHEEOs indicated that their states align statewide high school achievement tests with college or workforce postsecondary expectations. Second, states can use high school assessments to inform postsecondary admissions and placement. The survey asked SHEEOs if their states align high school assessments with postsecondary admissions and placement policies. Fewer than five SHEEOs indicated definitively that their states use high school achievement tests for these purposes.²

FINDING FOUR: FINANCE

Of the four key policy levers that states can use to improve P–16 policy, state finance was the least frequently mentioned in the SHEEO survey responses.

Claiming Common Ground (Callan et al. 2006) calls on states to “develop financial incentives to support and stimulate K–12 and postsecondary education to collaborate to improve college readiness and success” (p. 11). The report also finds that the separate legislative structures governing K–12 and postsecondary finance (for example, the committee processes) inhibit cross-sector collaboration in this area. The surveys did not ask specifically about state financial incentives, and, when asked to describe the nature of the P–16 initiatives’ work, most survey respondents did not describe financial policy levers as integral to stimulating their states’ P–16 efforts. Seven SHEEOs mentioned that their states use postsecondary financial aid to encourage college attendance. Three SHEEOs said their states provide funding for dual enrollment. Two mentioned that their states provide funding for students to take college placement exams.

² However, the survey responses were unclear for this question.

With the exception of funding challenges related to P–16 governance structures mentioned earlier, SHEEOs did not refer to barriers directly related to the state finance process.

Financial Aid

When asked about their P–16 policies and initiatives, fewer than ten states identified financial aid as an integral part of this effort. Two SHEEOs said that their states’ P–16 strategies include efforts to increase the availability of financial aid for college students generally. Other SHEEOs reported financial incentives targeted at specific groups. For example, one SHEEO said that the state is interested in increasing the availability of financial aid particularly for first-generation college-goers. Another SHEEO identified a grant-funded project designed for state residents age 25 or older.

Funding for Dual Enrollment

About one-fifth of states surveyed mentioned the funding of dual enrollment programs in which high school students enroll in college classes. For example, one SHEEO said, “For the 2008 [academic year], the [state] has initiated the dual enrollment program, [which] will pay the student costs for public high school students to enroll in courses for both high school and college credit.” Another state is implementing dual enrollment via state-funded distance learning courses: “The governor has initiated a program for the community colleges and universities to offer online courses to be funded through the Department of Postsecondary Education.” Other SHEEOs reported that their states recognize the need for dual enrollment and are moving toward implementing statewide dual enrollment policies. For example, one SHEEO said, “We need to work together to expand dual/concurrent enrollment programs and provide appropriate college credit for dual enrollment programs that transfer to a degree program.”

Funding for High School Assessment Exams

Another financial policy lever mentioned by a handful of survey respondents is state funding for high school assessments. A small number of states pay for high school students to take ACT, SAT or other assessment exams. In one or two states, the ACT is mandatory for all high school students. According to one SHEEO, “Funding has been provided to encourage high schools to offer college placement exams (for example, Compass) for high school juniors to assess their readiness.” Another said, “The 2006 General Assembly passed legislation mandating the administration of the ACT to all juniors and the early diagnostic ACT/EPAS (Explore and Plan) assessments to all 8th and 10th graders in public schools, paid by the state.”

FINDING FIVE: ACCOUNTABILITY

The states' primary focus for accountability appears to be on the P–12 sector. The most frequently cited accountability reporting at the postsecondary level is the high school feedback report.

Claiming Common Ground calls for states to publicly report on student progress and be held accountable for the improvement of student performance from high school through college completion. Without clearly defined achievement targets and public reporting of student progress it is impossible to tell how well state educational systems are ushering students through the educational pipeline.

Primary Accountability Focus Is on P–12 Schools

About half of the SHEEOS reported that their states have performance standards for high school academic progress. Eight SHEEOs indicated that their P–16 councils have the goal of implementing cross-sector accountability standards. However, only two of the 45 SHEEOs surveyed reported that their states have a clearly articulated P–16 accountability policy. One exception to the generally weak postsecondary accountability reporting is Georgia. The Georgia SHEEO reported that the state, “developed P–16 ‘data marts’ to monitor student progress from high school to college and into the workforce. Accountability measures have been set for high school graduation, college transition, and college success. The P–16 Department uses a Balanced Scorecard to strategically manage and communicate progress towards its goals.”

High School Feedback Reports

According to SHEEOs, the high school feedback report is a common performance reporting requirement. High school feedback reports are generated by colleges to inform high schools about their students' college readiness by describing their graduates' performance in college (typically their first-year performance). Seven SHEEOs indicated that their state higher education institutions provide such reports to high schools. A few of these states said they publish high school feedback reports for all schools. Others indicated that their postsecondary institutions provide feedback reports regarding “entering first-year students from specific high schools.”

FINDING SIX: PUBLIC RELATIONS

States are investing in marketing campaigns to promote the benefits of college and early college preparation.

Six SHEEOs mentioned the importance of marketing in their P–16 efforts. Of these, three reported that they are using public relations to convey the importance of education—and public education in particular—for state residents. For example, one SHEEO explained that his state’s P–16 initiative includes “an extensive public relations and marketing component.” Another SHEEO reported that the P–16 council is “educating the public about the importance of identifying and correcting weaknesses in the education system.”

Three SHEEOs reported that their states created marketing campaigns to convey to residents the importance of postsecondary education in particular. According to one SHEEO, for example, her state is “developing strategies for increasing postsecondary participation rates. [Strategies include] providing more information to students at all levels detailing the advantages of postsecondary work.” Another SHEEO described state efforts to raise “expectations leading to enrollment in colleges and universities.” A third reported “an enhanced focus on educational outreach,” including focusing on increasing participation of high school graduates in postsecondary education.

CROSS-THEMATIC FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Several overall conclusions can be drawn from the responses of state higher education executive officers across the themes identified above.

Gap Between Planning and Implementation of P–16 Policy

In most states, there appears to be a substantial gap between the planning and implementation of P–16 policy. While many SHEEOs described their states’ P–16 plans and goals, few reported on legislated P–16 policies. For example, 46 states have well-established student-level tracking systems that are designed for use in accountability reporting, but few state legislatures have designated use of the data system for accountability reporting. The gap between planning and implementation may be affected by the lack of policymaking authority of P–16 councils. Other factors that appear to affect states’ ability to move beyond plans and into implementation include: the challenge of bridging the cultural divide of P–12 and postsecondary education; the long history of divided state education governance structures (as described in chapter one); and the policy context in each state, including the ability of the education sector to influence state policy.

In light of this finding, states should begin to clearly distinguish between P–16 plans and policies, so that achieving agreement across the educational sectors about goals no longer remains confused with success in implementing P–16 policies. In addition, states would benefit from research that closely examines cross-sector collaborations in terms of the challenges and successes of moving beyond goal-setting to the implementation of policy.

National Efforts Can Foster P–20 Alignment in the States

A second conclusion of this analysis is that national organizations like Achieve and the Data Quality Campaign (DQC) appear to provide valuable frameworks which can serve as a catalyst within states for progress in specific alignment areas. For example, SHEEOs reported the greatest curricular alignment in math and English, the two areas most supported by Achieve’s American Diploma Project. Based on SHEEO responses, participation in Achieve appears to help states move forward with P–16 initiatives in at least two ways. First, these organizations provide a process that states can follow for aligning curricula, exams, and data systems. Second, participation in Achieve and DQC provides a common language that may help states bridge the cultural divide between P–12 and postsecondary education.

It is important to note, however, that, at least for curricular alignment, the standards provided by national organizations may not align with the expectations of postsecondary institutions within the state. For example, state math and English curricula may align with Achieve’s standards while not aligning with the state’s postsecondary institutions’ math and English curricula.³ Additional research is needed to address the ways these organizations shape P–16 efforts.

State Finance Is Underutilized as a Policy Lever

Another conclusion that can be drawn from this analysis is that state finance is underutilized as a P–16 policy lever. Very few of the surveyed SHEEOs articulated the ways that their states use financial incentives to promote P–16 alignment. Survey responses indicate that postsecondary financial aid, funding for dual enrollment, and assessment exams are used by fewer than half of the states. No states identified cross-sector budgeting to improve P–16 alignment or financial incentives to improve student persistence, course completion, or achievement. Further research is needed to better understand the extent to which financial mechanisms and incentives can be used to help align state P–12 and postsecondary education.

State Governance and Policy Context Affect the Use of Policy Levers

Finally, it appears that each state’s ability to use its policy levers is affected by its education governance structures and its policy context. In some high-control states, education policy tends to be more structured and manipulated at the state level—such as through a single statewide governing board or by legislative action. In low-control states, on the other hand, education policymaking is less concentrated in legislative authority and is sometimes fiercely regional or institutional in nature. Although the SHEEO

³ In addition, there is a self-selection issue regarding progress in curricular alignment, associated with states participating in ADP and DQC, since states most likely to participate in these efforts are those most likely to be most focused on P–16 alignment.

surveys are not conclusive in this regard, it appears that the amount of control a state has over its education policymaking may be an important factor to consider when assessing the state's ability to implement P-16 policy changes. Additional research may shed light on the role of the state policy context on P-16 policy implementation.

METHODOLOGICAL NOTES

Forty-four states completed the survey on P-16 councils of the State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO). Those not completing the survey were Florida, Maine, Connecticut, Iowa, Massachusetts, and New York. Heather Jack, policy consultant for the National Center, administered the survey and completed initial sorting and summary of the SHEEO responses. This chapter is based on Jack's summarized accounts of survey responses. Joni Finney and Michael Kirst assisted with data analysis and provided feedback on drafts. The Education Commission of the States (ECS) also conducted a survey of state P-16 councils, with results presented in "Diplomas Count" (2008), in Dounay (2008), and on the ECS website.

Survey questions were open-ended and asked a variety of questions in the following areas: the nature of state P-16 initiatives, the extent of alignment between P-12 and postsecondary curricula and assessments, and barriers to progress on state P-16 agendas. Some SHEEOs provided supplementary information from legislative and planning documents.

Content analysis of responses was used to examine the extent to which states are implementing P-16 policies. Content analysis is a research method described by Merriam (1998) as "the process of simultaneously coding raw data and constructing categories to capture relevant characteristics of the document's content" (p. 160). The first step in analyzing the survey data was to sort the responses into theoretical categories. Maxwell (2005) describes the process of creating theoretical categories as "placing the coded data into a more general or abstract framework" (p. 97). Using HyperResearch qualitative analysis software, relevant portions of the survey results were sorted into the following four categories: data systems; alignment (standards, coursework and assessments); finance; and accountability. Content analysis is an inductive process, so additional categories were allowed to emerge from the data. Survey responses that did not apply to the four categories were initially categorized as "other." Analysis of the survey results in the "other" category revealed two additional themes: P-16 governance and public relations.

Survey responses within each of the six categories were examined to determine if common themes existed. Using HyperResearch, content reports were generated that listed all relevant survey responses sorted by theoretical category. The content reports were examined and common themes that emerged from the survey responses were identified.

A limitation of this analysis is that the survey responses were open-ended and therefore not conducive to statistical analysis. However, the open-ended survey responses were useful for content analysis, allowing for the discovery of broad themes and trends across responses. In addition, the survey was administered two years ago; the survey responses reflect the status of P-16 policies at the time the data were collected. Supplementary data from recent national reports were used to help overcome this limitation. Another potential limitation is that the surveys were completed exclusively by SHEEOs, who may have different perceptions or knowledge of progress on various P-16 indicators than others involved with P-16 efforts.

Chapter Three

Building State College Readiness Initiatives

David S. Spence

During this decade, the college readiness theme has grown but not prospered. Although many states have developed P–16 councils, most states have not moved beyond the initial stages of dialogue to build effective statewide college readiness initiatives. This chapter outlines the key elements and actions that states need to consider in implementing a systemic readiness initiative, and concludes by examining some of the underlying reasons for the lack of progress nationwide. The key insights and suggestions in this chapter derive from the experiences of the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) in working with states on readiness initiatives, and from my experiences at California State University in seeking to improve college readiness of students.

I. STATEWIDE CONSENSUS ON KEY CONCEPTS

In order for a statewide college readiness initiative to gain traction and be sustainable over time, state leaders from government, K–12 schools, and postsecondary education need to develop consensus on some fundamental understandings and principles. The following five suggestions identify the key areas where consensus is needed.

1. Understand the Substance of Readiness

Students need to achieve a wide range of accomplishments and skills to be truly ready for postsecondary education, in course-taking, grades, study and scheduling skills, financial stability, motivation, and other areas. Because some of these attributes are intangible, it is difficult to measure their significance precisely. We know, however, that several are necessary, if not sufficient.

There is wide consensus—from research and practice—that students need to take appropriate courses to be ready for college. This core curriculum includes courses in reading, writing, and mathematics, since these are the cross-cutting, foundational skills needed for success in many first-year college courses. It also includes other academic courses, such as in science and social science. Research and practice also indicate, however, that taking these courses, and even earning good grades, does not ensure the development of the key learning skills needed for college success. A high percentage of students who have passed core academic coursework need remedial education in reading, writing, and math upon entering college.

As a result, student demonstration of high-level reading, writing, and math skills is critical to ensure college readiness. For higher-level study in any subject, it is essential that students be able to read a variety of texts with comprehension and to explain or elaborate their ideas in writing. Additionally, some success in mathematics—preferably through algebra II, but minimally through algebra, functions, and data analysis—assures that a student possesses the ability to work abstractly and with variables.

There is confusion nationally on this point concerning course-taking versus skills development. This confusion is caused by a lack of clarity and precision in how one views the courses or programs of study that students pursue in high school, on one hand, and the foundational or cross-cutting learning skills that students develop as part of these courses. However, this is not an either/or issue. Students need to take the right courses and develop the learning skills.

There appears to be growing agreement that all students need to tackle a core curriculum—four courses in English, four in mathematics at least through algebra II, four in science, and four in social science. Within this curriculum, schools can challenge and help students achieve a core of the knowledge and skills associated with this coursework, as documented by their grades and possibly by course-related common testing. These expectations should apply to all students, and can provide a background of knowledge and skills needed for success in college and careers.

However, in examining the specific reading, writing, and mathematics skills students need to continue learning after high school, it is generally agreed that whatever readiness standards do exist, they are not sufficiently rigorous to predict success. Either the standards do not exist statewide or they are set too low to predict success in first-year collegiate coursework to a significant extent. As a result, statewide college readiness initiatives require higher readiness standards in fundamental skill areas of reading, writing, and mathematics.

2. Identify the Scope of Readiness Standards: Readiness for What?

States need to move beyond the hopeful rhetoric about “all students ready for all options.” This generic language is not helpful, and it masks the challenges ahead. States need to identify clearly the levels, programs, and forms of postsecondary education to which readiness standards apply.

Readiness for Which Postsecondary Options?

Postsecondary education opportunities are wide ranging. They include career-technical and academic programs, and they range from military training to single courses, certificate programs, and associate and baccalaureate degree programs. Also included are on-the-job training and apprenticeship programs that merge career preparation and entry. For several years, popular rhetoric has held that all high school graduates need to be ready for all postsecondary opportunities, and that reading, writing, and math standards

are identical for all such options. This rhetoric has not been examined thoroughly and empirically. Moreover, as organizations and states have begun questioning this assumption, there is movement toward a more nuanced view.

Statewide college readiness initiatives need to focus on readiness to prepare for a career or job, rather than readiness to enter a career directly after high school graduation. The learning skills needed for success in collegiate academic programs and post-secondary career-technical programs for economically sustainable jobs have converged. Empirical evidence supports the application of similar readiness standards for postsecondary associate and bachelor's degree programs, both academic and career-oriented.¹ There is less research that establishes the kinds and levels of readiness needed for postsecondary technical programs at the certificate versus the diploma levels. Further study may suggest that one set of readiness standards for all postsecondary education is justified or that different forms of readiness, or ways to exhibit readiness, are needed.

Our experience at the Southern Regional Education Board indicates that effective statewide readiness initiatives should set readiness standards significantly higher than is now common. As states validate and then establish in policy these higher standards for degree programs, it is likely that differences in readiness for degree and non-degree programs may emerge. As a result, statewide readiness initiatives should focus initially on postsecondary degree programs, including career-technical associate degrees. A first priority should be to set strong, valid standards for associate's and bachelor's degree programs; at the same time, states should research fully the readiness standards suitable for non-degree programs.²

Readiness for Which Institutions of Postsecondary Education?

For greater impact, the readiness standards need to be applied to all postsecondary institutions that have a significant proportion of students who require remedial coursework in reading, writing, math, or all three areas. Practically, this means that all open-access, less selective, and moderately selective community colleges, colleges, and universities would be included (certainly encompassing all community colleges and regional universities). Students at selective universities with substantial admissions requirements would most likely meet the readiness standards, even though the standards, while related, would not necessarily align with the broader admissions criteria of these selective institutions (such as coursework, grades, and test scores). In light of these considerations, most statewide readiness initiatives need to apply to the community college and regional university sectors, and be led primarily by these sectors as well.

¹ This evidence is based in research concerning readiness or placement testing that occurs in colleges and universities.

² These studies were recommended by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) panel on 12th grade readiness.

Readiness for Which Areas of Postsecondary Study?

States have found it important to establish that their common core readiness standards apply to certain thresholds of study. The most common, and probably best, practice asserts that the readiness standards should be pegged to the level of reading, writing, and math skills needed to succeed in introductory coursework in the social science fields. Readiness to begin study in STEM fields (that is, science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) would require higher or different levels of readiness, particularly in mathematics. As they do now, postsecondary educational institutions would apply a different set of standards and assessments in the reading, writing, and math skill areas to determine readiness for these fields of study.

3. Recognize the Difference Between Readiness and Admissions Standards

Statewide college readiness initiatives seek to increase the percentage of high school students who are ready to begin postsecondary education. States, and the nation, decided long ago that access to college is a critical priority, meaning that states would provide students with opportunities to be admitted to at least some segments of postsecondary education, even if they needed remedial education.

This opportunity to attend college needs to be protected even as states seek to increase the readiness of students. Current admissions policies should continue to support access, and colleges should continue to offer remedial education, albeit more effectively and targeted toward higher expectations of performance. Concurrently, the less-selective and open-door institutions of postsecondary education need to join with the public schools to develop statewide readiness initiatives that reduce the need for remedial education. States should guard against the perception that a statewide college readiness initiative may be used to limit access or entry.

4. Ensure that College Readiness Standards Strongly Predict Skills Needed to Succeed in College

Few states, as a matter of public policy, recognize the nature and magnitude of the readiness challenge. This is because states have not set readiness standards that powerfully predict success in postsecondary education; nor do states apply them across all postsecondary education—from community colleges to universities. In other words, states either have no statewide readiness standards, or if they have them, they are set too low.

Self-reports by institutions of postsecondary education typically estimate remedial rates of 50% to 60% for community colleges and 20% to 30% for universities. However, in the few instances in which a state sets rigorous statewide or systemwide readiness standards, the rates for regional universities rise to 70%, and even higher for community college degree programs.

In 2005, ACT began to report the percentages of ACT-takers who achieved modest college readiness benchmarks that indicated a 50% chance of earning a B and a 75% chance of earning a C in first-year college courses in English and math. The results show that 70% of students need remedial help in English, math, or both (ACT 2009).

States need to link their college readiness standards to performance levels that virtually ensure success in at least the first year of college coursework. Best practice holds that these standards should be validated empirically by comparing student performance on the readiness standards to actual performance in introductory post-secondary courses. Practically, this will require states to establish significantly higher readiness standards than those in place currently (if any exist at the state level). Moreover, it is highly likely that the application of these standards will increase rates of remediation in the short term. It is important that states recognize this situation, and maintain their focus on setting readiness standards at the high levels needed for success in postsecondary education. The worst case would be for a state to maintain mediocre readiness standards in order to minimize any potential increase in remediation.

5. Recognize the Gap Between High School Graduation and Postsecondary Readiness

States with high school graduation tests will discover that rigorous standards reflecting postsecondary readiness will require substantially higher scores on exams than the minimum scores required for graduation. The gap between current high school graduation standards and those needed for postsecondary readiness will occur in all states. States need to recognize this gap, and commit to increasing the percentage of graduates who meet the readiness standards.

II. THE STEPS OF A STATEWIDE COLLEGE READINESS INITIATIVE

Several organizations and states have proposed college and career readiness agendas that feature important elements for improving college readiness. The following steps or components, taken together and implemented effectively, comprise a *comprehensive* and *systemic* statewide college readiness initiative.

1. Statewide College/Career Readiness Standards

The success of a statewide college readiness initiative depends on having one set of performance standards for reading, writing, and mathematics that are approved and prioritized by all public schools and postsecondary institutions. Having one set of standards is vital to sending clear signals to all high school students and teachers about what it means to be college/career ready. The readiness standards should be defined in detail in both content and performance terms. Teachers deserve one set of targeted standards and will thrive on having a focused set of fewer and deeper standards.

2. Common and Consistent Application of Readiness Standards

Both K–12 and postsecondary education need to recognize the same core readiness standards as driving college readiness preparation in all public schools and all readiness/course placement procedures in postsecondary education.

3. Readiness Assessments in High School (11th Grade)

It is important to assess students' progress in meeting the readiness standards no later than their junior year in high school. These assessments will serve to identify concretely the levels of performance needed across the readiness standards, and they will give high school students (and their teachers) specific feedback on progress in meeting the readiness standards. In addition, they will identify students who need targeted help during the senior year to meet the standards.

4. School Curriculum

Public school curricula should be modified as necessary to target the specific statewide readiness standards, mapping back at least to grade eight. Supplemental curricula and programs designed to teach the skills needed to succeed in first-year college courses should be developed and taught in 12th grade to help students who, based on 11th grade assessments, may graduate without being college-ready.

5. Teacher Development

Ensuring that all teachers fully understand the readiness standards, their importance, and how to teach them effectively is a central component of a statewide college readiness initiative. Teacher development targeted specifically to the readiness standards is crucial, and involves both pre-service and in-service preparation. Pre-service teacher preparation programs need to be reviewed and revised as needed to include an emphasis on the core readiness standards. In addition, adjustments need to be made in state teacher licensure and certification regulations, so as to reinforce the standards.

6. School Accountability

School and student performance on the college readiness assessments should be part of the state school accountability program. This would send a clear message that it is important that all schools make college readiness a priority and that increasing percentages of students meet the standards.

7. Postsecondary Education Accountability for the Application of the Standards

In order for the college readiness initiative to be systemic and effective, postsecondary education as a whole must be involved in many of the key steps. To give the readiness standards the high priority needed across public schools, all postsecondary institutions

that engage in post-admission placement or readiness testing need to base such assessments on the readiness standards and performance levels adopted statewide. In addition, states need to hold postsecondary education more accountable for related outcomes—namely, increasing the percentage of entering students who succeed in first-year courses, and increasing the percentage who successfully complete remedial work based on the shared state readiness standards.

III. PRINCIPLES FOR BUILDING THE READINESS INITIATIVE

The effectiveness of a statewide college readiness initiative depends both on its being comprehensive (the full range of components are implemented) and systemic (each step is connected to the others).

Many statewide college readiness initiatives are too narrow: they fail to address the comprehensive range of steps beyond the creation or alignment of readiness standards and assessments. While developing precise and clear readiness standards is the cornerstone of the process, it is through assessment and professional development that the standards are implemented and readiness becomes a reality. The best readiness standards will go for naught if teachers are not clear about what they are to teach, how best to teach it, and how to identify whether students have adequately learned it.

Across states, the order of implementation for the components of a readiness initiative will vary depending on the state's circumstances and cycles. Nonetheless, all components are ultimately required. Failure to incorporate all of them is a principal reason that many states' efforts are falling short. For instance, many states have increased the number of required courses for high school graduation, but have not identified the core readiness standards in reading, writing, and mathematics as separate but related requirements. Other states have established such skill standards as part of college readiness standards, but have failed to get all public colleges and universities to use those standards in placing students in college-level courses. Other states have increased teacher training, but have not linked the training to specific readiness standards in those fields, limiting the impact of the training on college and career readiness.

In addition to being comprehensive, college readiness initiatives need to be implemented through a systemic, coordinated approach. Adherence to the following principles can assist in developing such an approach:

1. Create a common vision of success;
2. Link all steps to the readiness standards;
3. Make decisions based on what will help classroom teachers most; and
4. Develop joint ownership by K–12 and postsecondary education.

1. Create a Common Vision of Success

State policy leaders, K–12 education, and postsecondary education need to agree specifically on what defines a successful initiative in terms of both K–12 and postsecondary educational goals. These goals need to mesh and be mutually supportive, and it is helpful for the outcomes to begin with postsecondary education and trace back to K–12. Performance objectives should be grounded in empirically based, realistic descriptions of the readiness standards, the current status of student readiness, and the goals for increasing readiness statewide. These goals should be ambitious but reachable.

Success factors for postsecondary education include completion rates for first-year students in first-year coursework and overall degree-completion rates. Another important factor is the extent to which remedial education programs succeed in helping students meet the standards. The goals need to specify which postsecondary education institutions, sectors, levels, and kinds of programs will be targeted. Outcomes need to be defined in terms of measures used, types of goal (improvement or absolute), and timeframe. Goals for K–12 education need to center on improving the percentages of students meeting the readiness standards.

In short, concrete goals and measures need to be set for improving readiness, and the subsequent outcomes of doing so need to be identified. To ensure transparency for the general public, state accountability programs and public reporting activities for schools and colleges should feature these goals and measures.

2. Link All Steps to the Readiness Standards

To ensure systemic alignment among the components, it is crucial to maintain a clear focus on developing and implementing a specific set of core readiness standards. All other steps should flow from and lead back to this focus. Some of the steps can be started as the standards are being identified; however, no step can be implemented fully without the core readiness standards in place.

K–12 and postsecondary education ultimately need to agree on one set of readiness standards in reading, writing, and mathematics, which should be defined in detail in both content and performance terms. Both K–12 and postsecondary education need to adopt these standards, prioritize them, and apply them rigorously. Working from one set of clearly defined readiness standards contributes greatly to the extent to which classroom teachers will come to understand the standards and commit to the teaching of associated curricula. The teachers deserve one set of target standards rather than competing standards or “crosswalk” documents that seek to connect similar but slightly different standards.

Not achieving agreement on common readiness standards poses the greatest risk to successful implementation of the readiness initiative. Statewide college readiness initiatives have progressed beyond the early “standards phase” in only a few states, and this is largely owing to a lack of development in substantive detail of such standards.

While most agree that developing consensus on readiness standards is crucial, less certainty and unanimity exist concerning the nature of the standards and how to build consensus, including between K–12 and postsecondary education.

The path taken by most states has emphasized the alignment process, which suffers from several deficiencies. First, the expected nature of the readiness standards is not clear or established from the beginning. Second, alignment frequently begins and ends with a comparison of proposed readiness standards for K–12 schools with standards that have been set externally, such as those of Achieve’s American Diploma Project (ADP) or the standards that provide the basis for the ACT or SAT. This kind of “benchmark comparative alignment” provides useful information to assure a certain level of quality or appropriate substance in the proposed standards. While this “quality benchmarking” is important, the alignment process typically does not venture into other needed phases of standards-setting. Alignment seldom goes beyond comparisons of the general content of standards. While describing the content of a standard is necessary, it is not sufficient for implementation purposes. For a standard to be conveyed to and understood by teachers, it must have a clear performance dimension—it must establish how well the content must be performed. Few states have extended their alignment efforts into these domains, which practically and necessarily require more complex comparisons of standards-related assessments, curriculum frameworks, and even student assignments.

In addition, current alignment efforts seldom compare the readiness standards of K–12 and postsecondary education within the state. Of course, this kind of comparison is not possible in most states, because their systems of postsecondary education do not have a single set of readiness standards to advance.

3. Make Decisions Based on What Will Help Classroom Teachers

The implementation of a readiness initiative can be strengthened if decisions in each step are made according to the following principle: Which option will best create the conditions for classroom teachers statewide to help students be ready for college? This principle recognizes that the K–12 classroom is the primary focus of action. It is where education needs to change to increase student readiness.

This principle arguably provides the most critical element in pursuing a systemic, connected approach to building a statewide college readiness initiative. Linking all action steps and decisions to one criterion—what will help the classroom teacher most—provides a common, clear thread connecting standards to testing to curriculum to teacher development to school and college accountability. This principle can guide decisions about the kinds of standards and who sets them, the form and nature of testing involved, the criteria of school accountability, and the nature of the school curriculum and teacher development. In each of these areas, there are often competing options to be sorted through, but there is usually a best alternative when this principle is applied.

4. Develop Joint Ownership by K–12 and Postsecondary Education

Joint ownership and action by K–12 and postsecondary education are crucial to connecting and strengthening each step in a readiness initiative. In light of the critical importance of creating a common set of readiness standards, it seems obvious that their development should be fully shared at the deepest levels. To the contrary, the typical situation finds K–12 and postsecondary education advancing their own individual sets of standards and then relying on a superimposed process to align them. In addition, the involvement of postsecondary education in the development of school testing and curriculum is rare. Postsecondary education often has a role in teacher development, including in-service and teacher preparation programs; however, in few cases have K–12 and postsecondary education jointly developed curricula specifically around the readiness standards.

The importance of joint action stems from its capacity to build deep and common understanding and commitment to the core standards. Only through truly joint work, beginning with the creation of the standards, can K–12 and postsecondary education develop ownership of the content and of the more subtle performance expectations. This joint ownership will also strengthen the effectiveness of each component of the initiative. For example, the involvement of postsecondary education in the construction of readiness assessments can ensure a consensus on performance levels and qualifying scores. As a result of their participation, postsecondary education can adopt post-admission placement testing and remedial education programs based on the exact standards and performance expectations used by K–12 in its readiness tests. In addition, postsecondary education can use its knowledge of the standards to connect its in-service and pre-service programs to the standards. Likewise, the direct involvement of postsecondary education can also be beneficial in developing senior-year courses focused on helping students meet the readiness standards.

A systemic approach also suggests that both the 12th grade courses and postsecondary remedial courses focus on the same readiness standards and performance expectations. It further holds that the 12th grade courses and the summer or freshman-year remedial courses should be similar in content and delivery. Certainly, these courses should be consistent in their focus on the readiness outcomes.

IV. IMPLEMENTATION AND BEST PRACTICES

Building on the principles of the previous section, this section examines in greater detail the seven steps of a comprehensive and systemic statewide college readiness initiative, with explanations concerning how a principle might apply, and descriptions of best or common practices.

1. Statewide College/Career Readiness Standards

The development of an effective set of readiness standards is fundamental to driving each subsequent step in the agenda. To ensure the most effective standards, we suggest the following:

a. Focus on learning skills, while also making clear that readiness depends on taking the core courses that are necessary for college success.

Being ready for college requires that the right courses be taken in high school. Taking the right college preparatory curriculum, however, does not ensure that necessary learning skills (reading, writing, and mathematical reasoning) have been developed. States, or their systems of higher education, should require appropriate coursework in high school for college readiness, but they should also focus on ensuring that key learning skills are developed.

Most states and readiness experts have focused on reading, writing, and math skills because more is known about the relationship of these core skills to first-year success in college. These are also the skills that enable students to learn further and to build knowledge. They are the cross-cutting, foundational skills needed for learning in any discipline. As a result, they are most appropriate to statewide efforts to establish a threshold level of skills for college readiness. While adding knowledge-based standards from the various science and social science subject areas might make the readiness criteria stronger and more predictive, it is the reading, writing, and math skills that are essential, and probably most predictive of readiness. Moreover, a concentration on fewer standards in depth is probably more powerful in statewide initiatives of this scope.

b. Define the standards in both content and performance terms.

It is critical to provide a detailed description of the content of the readiness standards. These descriptions of the specific skills and knowledge needed provide the foundation from which the standards are interpreted and manifested by the schools and their teachers.

However, these general content descriptions must also be converted into performance terms, to identify how well something can be done or known. Deriving and building common statewide understandings of student performance is challenging, intensive work. These performance expectations are defined through the development of test items, rubrics, curricular materials, assignments, and associated grading protocols. The performance expectations are further interpreted through new teacher preparation and professional development. Only in these ways can classroom teachers come to know exactly what levels and kinds of performance characterize a standard.

Defining explicitly how well and at what level a student needs to be reading, writing, or doing math to be ready for college can be accomplished by having

postsecondary and public school teachers (with the technical assistance of experts) develop a shared understanding of expected performance levels. This can be done by postsecondary and K–12 teachers jointly evaluating student work and negotiating a shared view of acceptable levels of performance. This will be painstaking, detailed work, but it can yield invaluable results—a clear sense of exactly how well students must perform. Indeed, this interactive process will help to powerfully convey the readiness standards to classroom teachers through professional development, and to prospective teachers in preparation programs. State readiness initiatives need to be capped by such a process, or all of the standards-setting and testing will have limited value.

c. The exact readiness standards created by K–12 and postsecondary education should be embedded in the state curriculum and adopted by the state K–12 and postsecondary education boards.

This issue concerns the relationships of the college readiness and school standards. Teachers should not be forced to sort through overlaying or correlating (if not competing) sets of academic standards. In this era of school accountability, teachers focus on state-adopted standards and tests more than ever. Some states will need to upgrade, revise, supplement, or substitute current school standards to ensure that the exact readiness standards are embedded and that they reflect the performance expectations.

2. Common and Consistent Application of Readiness Standards

With these fully shared and commonly understood standards in place, both K–12 and postsecondary education need to commit to their application throughout each of their respective sectors and in each successive step of the initiative. One example of the need for consistent application of readiness standards concerns the current situation in which individual institutions of postsecondary education, especially community colleges, do not use a common set of placement standards or tests to assess readiness, nor are they based on any existing school-based standards.

In concrete terms, consistent application of the common readiness standards means that the specific standards and performance expectations are:

- Adopted by the state board as official state school standards;
- Emphasized and highlighted in school testing programs;
- Used and emphasized in school curriculum frameworks and materials;
- Used by the state to hold schools accountable for increasing the percentages of students who meet the standards;
- Used by K–12 and postsecondary education to develop senior-year curricula focused specifically on the common readiness standards to help students who are not ready;

- Used by both K–12 and postsecondary education to deliver in-service teacher development statewide;
- Used by postsecondary education in all its pre-service teacher preparation programs;
- Used by postsecondary education in their post-admission placement or readiness tests, which means one set of placement tests and qualifying scores across all postsecondary education; and
- Used by postsecondary education as central standards that guide postsecondary education remedial programs.

3. Readiness Assessments in High School (11th Grade)

By assessing student progress in meeting the readiness standards in the 11th grade, a statewide readiness initiative can signal students about their progress while allowing time to strengthen key skills before completing high school. Just as importantly, the tests can help teachers understand more deeply the performance that is expected of students.

As states have developed the assessment component of readiness initiatives, implementation issues have included the following:

a. Selection of Test

Perhaps the most critical issue concerns the kind of test to be used. A few states have used tests such as the ACT or SAT to estimate readiness. They have the advantage of providing normative comparisons with other states and of being commonly used already—many students take them. However, their substantial disadvantage lies in the likelihood that their standards will not be connected directly and strongly to a state’s common readiness standards. This risks sending competing signals to teachers.

In considering the form of readiness testing to use, states should apply two systemic principles discussed above, namely: (1) Which is most closely linked to the single set of readiness standards shared by K–12 and postsecondary education? and (2) Which is most effective in helping teachers understand the standards and employ them effectively?

State-originated tests appear to meet these two criteria most effectively. Teachers give priority to tests that are central to state, school, and student accountability. To the extent that these state tests can be adjusted to include the full range of readiness standards, they will rise to an even higher level of priority for classroom teachers. Also, state tests have the advantage of being more closely linked to state-adopted standards and classroom teaching.

If the state decides to use admissions and norm-referenced tests such as the ACT and SAT, the state will need assurance that these tests contribute to the following criteria:

- The standards on which these tests are based become the recognized statewide college readiness standards;
- The ACT or SAT standards—not correlates or additions—become the officially recognized statewide public school standards;
- These tests become the state tests for assessing both college readiness and high school achievement of the school standards (and are factors in the state school accountability process); and
- The ACT or SAT standards are made transparent enough so that they can be conveyed to classroom teachers in performance terms.

The more straightforward choice, however, is for states to identify one set of readiness standards agreed to by schools and colleges statewide, integrate these identical standards into state-adopted school standards, and then revise state tests to measure performance on these exact standards.

b. End-of-Course Exams

Another assessment issue that needs resolution concerns the basis for the test—course-based or comprehensive (across a series of courses). End-of-course tests (in English III and algebra II) are emerging as best practice, owing to their capacity to connect the specific readiness standards explicitly and strongly to classroom teachers and curricula. These tests can be crafted to target the specific state readiness standards and can yield information useful for identifying student needs and improving instruction. States can highlight subsets of items on these tests to target the readiness standards and generate a unique readiness score or sub-score.

In addition, best practice suggests that states use these tests as anchor assessments to build a ladder of correlations with assessments of earlier coursework, such as creating performance expectations in algebra I and geometry that link to those in algebra II.

c. Setting Test Score Levels to Signify Readiness

States will be challenged when setting the test score levels that signify readiness. Particularly for tests that are also used for high-stakes graduation purposes, there will be pressure to minimize the gap between a valid readiness score and a minimum score required for high school graduation. However, the greatest danger to the goal of improving readiness lies in setting the readiness qualifying scores too low. The scores should be set at a level that signifies the reading, writing, and mathematics learning skills necessary to succeed in first-year college work.

Performance expectation levels should be set according to the following criteria:

- The performance levels should be tied to success in first-year courses in postsecondary education. Validation studies between performance levels on

the readiness standards and performance in first-year courses should be conducted.

- The performance levels should be indexed to the skill levels needed to begin associate and bachelor's degree study at institutions that have open-access, less selective, and moderately selective admissions criteria. The standards should relate directly to the threshold skills needed by students to succeed at these institutions.
- States should set the performance levels without regard to assessment requirements for graduation. All states will have a significant gap between high-stakes graduation test scores and valid readiness scores for postsecondary education. If a state uses the same test for both purposes, the state should set two qualifying scores.
- States need to set performance levels without reference to their impact on remedial education. Remedial education rates in postsecondary education will probably spike in the short term after a state establishes rigorous standards statewide. In addition, adults returning to postsecondary education may continue to need developmental education. Hopefully, however, remedial education rates will decrease over time.
- The qualifying scores should be set at a level that indicates readiness immediately. They should not be adjusted downward to estimate student growth in these skills during the senior year.
- The qualifying scores should be substantially the same as those in placement tests used by institutions of postsecondary education across the state. This will entail conforming postsecondary education placement practice to the specific content standards and performance expectations of the English III and algebra II tests.
- Students who meet the readiness performance standards on the advanced end-of-course tests should be exempted from taking further placement or readiness tests upon admission to a public community college or a university with relatively low selectivity. The exemption for mathematics in a highly selective university might be conditioned upon a student taking a senior-year mathematics course (not necessarily at a level higher than algebra II).

4. School Curriculum

Students identified through the junior year tests as not meeting the readiness standards should be provided senior-year instruction to help them meet the standards before high school graduation. The delivery of the instruction might vary (for example, one or two

semester courses, modules, online or face-to-face tutorials), but the content should be indexed to the skills needed to succeed in college-level courses.

The following points should be considered in developing these senior-year courses:

- The initial focus should be on English/language arts (specifically, expository reading and writing) and mathematics.
- The courses and other activities should be explicitly directed to the students and linked to the performance gaps identified in the junior year readiness tests.
- Successful completion of these activities should earn credit toward the high school diploma.
- These activities should be developed jointly by public school and postsecondary staff, faculty, and teachers.
- A common assessment of student performance on these 12th grade activities should be developed to determine if the students meet readiness standards. If so, the student should be deemed ready and not subject to further placement testing in postsecondary education. Another assessment option might be for students who have completed the recommended 12th grade activities to retake the algebra II and English III exams to achieve a higher score—one that meets or exceeds college readiness.

As states develop this senior-year curriculum, they might examine the work completed by California State University (CSU), especially in reading and writing. Responding to the need to help seniors meet readiness standards, CSU concluded that expository reading and writing posed the greatest challenge to students' being ready for college in California. This led to the development of a wholly different approach for some 12th grade language arts classes. CSU faculty and staff determined that the fundamental reading problem lay in students' limited capacity to read and understand complex texts, such as textbooks in different disciplines, analytical essays, and advanced newspaper editorials and opinion columns. Further, they found that this contributed to the students' limited understanding of math and other disciplines.

Given the importance of this skill, CSU faculty, K–12 public school teachers, and content experts developed a 12th grade expository reading and writing course based on a series of modules designed to help students comprehend and explain academically dense texts. Course assignments emphasize the in-depth study of expository, analytical, and argumentative reading and writing. Designed to prepare students for college-level English, the course also includes an assignment template and an accompanying series of primarily nonfiction texts.

The academic standards it covers are aligned with the official California school content standards. However, the substance of the course—and especially the related

professional development for teachers—extends teachers’ understanding beyond the simple description of a standard (what needs to be known or done) to the actual level of expected student performance (how well something is known or done).

5. Teacher Development

Practicing teachers deserve assistance in understanding the readiness standards and how to teach them. Pre-service teacher programs also need to ensure that all new teachers receive preparation in these areas. Professional development programs for principals and other administrators also need to reflect the standards.

For teacher development, the goal is to build a shared understanding both of the level of challenge or difficulty needed in the curriculum and of the level of student performance to be expected. Practically, this means elaborating on the state curriculum frameworks and providing concrete, shared examples of materials, lessons, assignments, and assessments of student work that will build clearer understandings of expected performance.

The following points should be considered in the professional development of teachers:

- A common, statewide professional development curriculum should be developed to help teachers understand and use the reading, writing, and math readiness standards. State coordination is needed to ensure that the shared understandings of the readiness standards are conveyed consistently.
- Professional development for teachers should feature how the key readiness standards in each relevant course should be understood by content and level of performance.
- The professional development curriculum and activities should be linked to the specific readiness standards and performance expectations in the junior-year readiness exams.
- The activities should include teacher training directly related to the 12th grade readiness courses, such as: how the courses are constructed; the standards and expectations on which they are based; how their materials, lessons, and assignments relate to the performance standards; course assessment rubrics to ensure shared performance expectations; and instructional strategies that are particularly effective in teaching these standards.

6. School Accountability

Recently, some states have made high school graduation rates an important part of accountability. Some progressive state accountability systems are also targeting higher achievement levels, such as the percentage of high school graduates meeting college readiness standards. By including postsecondary readiness measures in statewide

accountability systems, states encourage schools to make readiness a priority. A systemic readiness initiative will be reinforced by a state school accountability program that highlights college readiness and recognizes schools statewide that increase the percentages of high school graduates who achieve the readiness standards.

7. Postsecondary Education Accountability

The commitment of postsecondary education to statewide college readiness initiatives will be strengthened if states hold colleges and universities accountable for helping students succeed in first-year college study and for helping students meet the common readiness standards through their own remedial education programs.

V. STATE FACTORS INHIBITING COLLEGE READINESS INITIATIVES

At the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB), we have found several underlying reasons for the lack of progress on statewide college readiness initiatives, some relating to statewide priority and urgency, others to issues concerning public schools or postsecondary education, individually, and, in some cases, jointly. We highlight the key implementation challenges below not to be negative, but because we recognize the complex challenges facing states as they seek to build consensus on how to implement the details of a readiness initiative. The following outline introduces some of the key issues that need to be addressed if statewide college readiness initiatives are to advance effectively.

First, most states do not recognize a significant readiness problem. Research shows that most students are not well prepared to begin college study in language arts, mathematics, or both. Even many students who are not required to take remedial courses are not well prepared for college work, and many professors and college administrators know this. Few states apply one set of readiness standards across all of postsecondary education, with the result that individual campuses or systems set their own readiness or placement standards. Frequently, the standards are lower than they should be. Only a handful of states have formally recognized the huge size of the readiness challenge, but those states that do recognize the magnitude of the problem are more likely to take action toward improvement.

Second, postsecondary education has yet to embrace the improvement of college readiness as a series of concrete actions in its own best interest—as well as in the best interest of every state and the nation. Remedial education still generates per-student funding, and many students who are not ready for college still make their way into degree-credit courses and generate funding, at least until they drop out. Their lack of readiness also provides an explanation for low college graduation rates. Making postsecondary education more accountable for postsecondary completion, while

maintaining access, would force a more serious commitment to readiness, because it is a key factor in certificate and degree completion.

Third, postsecondary education sometimes confuses the need to improve readiness with a threat to college admission or entry. Confusing readiness with admission will only keep states and postsecondary education systems from reaching consensus on making readiness a priority. Broad-access and open-door institutions (which serve a large majority of students across the nation) will not fully embrace a readiness initiative if they believe it will negatively affect access. Therefore, states need to assert that access will be maintained regardless of the readiness agenda. Remedial education will continue, except that there will hopefully be less need for it when more students are prepared for college.

Fourth, a major reason for many stalled readiness initiatives stems from the pervasive national rhetoric that somehow minimum high school graduation requirements must ensure readiness. Improving college readiness includes strengthening high school graduation requirements, but states and higher education systems cannot delay college readiness initiatives while waiting for graduation requirements to rise. All states need to raise high school graduation requirements, increase high school graduation rates, improve student achievement, and ensure that higher proportions of students are ready for college upon completing high school. All of these areas need careful and diligent work from K–12 and postsecondary leaders working together. Rhetoric calling for high school graduation requirements and high-stakes graduation tests to be changed overnight to ensure college readiness for all students in the near term may cause the public schools and key policymakers to question whether higher graduation requirements are realistic. Many states already struggle with low graduation rates in high schools, even under existing requirements and tests.

Fifth, many states may be stymied by the unexamined national rhetoric claiming that the same kind and level of readiness standards are required for all postsecondary options—from on-the-job training, to certificates, to degrees, and so on. We have no empirical evidence supporting such assertions. A better course of action would be to take action in areas we know about, especially readiness for postsecondary degree programs, and seek to build the empirical data for other fields.

Sixth, both postsecondary education and the public schools have been slow to recognize that meeting the college readiness challenge will center on setting specific, measurable performance standards in key learning skills, and having more students achieve them. There is still some confusion over this focus, especially in postsecondary education, which has little experience in performance standards–based education (in contrast to public schools since the 1990s). Postsecondary education tends to see readiness as synonymous with high school courses and grades or with ACT or SAT scores. While rigorous high school courses and good grades are necessary, they do not by any means ensure readiness. The national admissions tests may come closer to indicating student readiness in reading, writing, and math, but they do not provide the precise and

transparent focus on the core standards that high school teachers need for their classroom instruction.

Finally, states have been slow to transform college readiness initiatives into “statewide” efforts. A readiness agenda requires a statewide effort so that all of postsecondary education acts as a body, agreeing on one set of readiness standards and uniformly communicating them to all high schools in a state. Unfortunately, no state has managed yet to get all of postsecondary education—universities and community colleges—to speak with one voice. College readiness will be improved only when high school teachers receive clear and concise signals about standards, backed by all of postsecondary education in their state. State-level policy direction is necessary to provide the framework for public schools and postsecondary education to coordinate their efforts.

CONCLUSION

There have been state efforts over the past decade to improve college readiness, and some of these efforts have moved beyond dialogue to producing some common and best practices in several key areas. As a result, the key components of a statewide college readiness initiative are beginning to be better understood, and several principles have emerged that may help in driving their implementation farther. To date, most state efforts have been narrowly focused on standards and assessments, and, in some cases, have included accountability efforts. However, the Southern Regional Education Board, the California State University System, the State of Texas, and others have sought to develop statewide college readiness initiatives through a more extended set of related steps such as teacher development and curricular change. Nonetheless, no state has effectively implemented all of the needed steps, and, when some steps have been addressed, they have often been carried out in piecemeal ways. This reflects the substantial challenges facing states that seek to develop comprehensive and systemic statewide college readiness initiatives, but it does not diminish the need for this work to be pushed forward in every state, so that more students can be prepared for postsecondary education.

PART II

Case Studies of State P-16 and P-20 Councils

Chapter Four
Arizona's P-20 Council

Nancy B. Shulock

Arizona is a young, vibrant and diverse state with great potential. We enjoy a spirit of optimism, a beautiful physical environment and a dynamic population. More than most states—indeed more than most nations—Arizona is poised to thrive in the fast-paced 21st century. But to get there, we will need an education system that . . . ensures that all of our children and youth succeed in school and are prepared to succeed in life.

—*Educating Arizona*, 2008, p. 3

Optimism in the face of huge challenges characterizes *Educating Arizona*, a report published in 2008 by the Arizona Community Foundation. The report describes substantial demographic challenges in Arizona and poor statewide rankings on numerous indicators of educational performance, but concludes that “the good news is that we can fix these conditions” (Arizona Community Foundation 2008). According to the report, one of the promising signs that the state is starting to address its challenges can be found in the work of the Governor’s P-20 Council of Arizona. Our case study of the council affirms the community foundation’s finding. Although the council was only three years old at the time of our study, it had already mobilized stakeholders across the state behind a common agenda of raising educational attainment and improving the state’s economic position in the face of unprecedented challenges.¹

In this chapter, I begin with descriptive information about the state policy context for the P-20 Council, including the council’s origins, operations, and priorities. The chapter then offers an analysis of the value and challenges of this council in terms of

¹ The research for this case study was conducted by a team of four individuals, under the leadership of the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education. The team interviewed 13 individuals in a site visit conducted March 19–20, 2008. Interviewees included Governor’s Office staff, college and university chancellors and presidents, leaders of regional foundations and businesses, and council members. The case study author, a member of the team, supplemented interview data with an extensive review of available reports and documents. The information reflects a snapshot in time. Except as otherwise noted, all information and activities are presented as of the time of the research. It is important to note that Janet Napolitano, a Democrat, was governor when the study was conducted but was subsequently appointed by President Obama to his administration and was replaced by Republican Jan Brewer.

supporting a statewide agenda to align high school and postsecondary education and meet the state's policy priorities for educating Arizonans.

STATE POLICY CONTEXT

Arizona's educational system is facing rapid population growth, particularly among low-income individuals and non-English speaking residents—the very students whose academic achievement has lagged statewide averages. Meanwhile, the state is seeking to address these challenges while experiencing fiscal constraints that are more severe than in many states. For example, Arizona has a political culture and history of anti-tax sentiment and low public investment in education. In addition, ballot initiatives have been used to limit the power of the Legislature in addressing public priorities. Funding per student in both K–12 and postsecondary education is well below national averages.

Arizona suffers from poor performance on most of the indicators that have become commonly used to compare educational performance among states. Since the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education began issuing its 50-state report card, *Measuring Up*, in 2000, Arizona has consistently been among the lowest performers in preparing students for college. For example, it is one of the poorest-performing states in the percentage of young people completing a high school credential. In addition, Arizona eighth graders score very poorly on national assessments, especially in mathematics. There is reportedly a weak college-going culture in the state—evidenced in part by the importance given among many Arizonans to celebrating eighth grade graduations.

Like most states, Arizona has a complicated governing structure for public education that has evolved over time and resulted in diffused decision-making authority and accountability. Arizona is one of eleven states in which voters elect a statewide superintendent who must work with a state board appointed by the governor. The superintendent serves four-year terms, oversees the Arizona Department of Education, and serves as an executive member of the State Board of Education. The Board of Education sets policy for all public schools and the Department of Education is charged with implementing that policy. Among the policies established by the Board are the minimum course of study, requirements for high school graduation, and competency tests. There are 219 school districts with locally elected boards that operate within the policy framework adopted by the State Board (Arizona Community Foundation 2008, p. 46).

In the postsecondary arena, college participation patterns do not produce sufficient levels of educational attainment to meet state priorities and needs. Comparatively few high school students in Arizona enroll directly in college, and this pattern of college-going tends to be associated with lower degree-completion rates. Arizona has relatively high rates of adult enrollment in community colleges, but

completion rates are low for these students. The combined effect of these patterns is baccalaureate production well below state needs in today's competitive global economy.

Contributing to these low completion rates for bachelor's degrees is a university system that is, by all accounts, undersized for the state's growing population and not readily accessible to rural populations. Arizona has over six million people but only three public universities. In keeping what some describe as a "wild west" culture, the state's higher education enterprise has operated without a clear design for differentiating among the missions of the universities and the ten community colleges. All three universities are research institutions without, until recently, a strong focus on accommodating undergraduate education demand. One effect of limiting access to four-year public institutions has been the development of a very large community college system. Within the public sector, 63% of enrollments are in community colleges, a rate which is fourth highest in the nation and well above the national average of 47% (NCES 2007). The high use of the community colleges is less the result of design, as in California for example, and more the result of limited access to four-year universities.

Another aspect of higher education governance that presents challenges for educational planning and reform in Arizona is the lack of a central oversight body or system for the state's community colleges. The system office was eliminated by the Legislature in 2002 due to concerns that system priorities were interfering with local priorities.

Financial challenges also loom large among the factors contributing to the low production of bachelor's degrees in Arizona. The state has been slow to provide student financial aid, yet tuition has risen precipitously, as it has in most states. Arizona has received failing grades in the *Measuring Up* report card series for the "affordability" of higher education, as families must devote unsustainable amounts of their incomes to pay for tuition, room, board, and other fees (National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education 2008).

Financial challenges, however, have also provided some impetus for action in the state. In 2002–03, when many states were raising tuition and Arizona general fund resources were stagnant, the State Board of Regents, which oversees the three public universities, rejected its staff recommendation to increase tuition. The pressure of growing enrollment demand at a time when budgets were held flat led the state to apply for participation in a national project called "Changing Direction." Managed by the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE), the project aimed to help states coordinate their finance policies so as to improve higher education access and outcomes. This proved to be one of several efforts by the state's political and educational leaders to draw upon national experts to help align Arizona's educational system with its policy priorities.

Finally, state politics also affects education planning and reform. Political battles have been shaped by the tension between a conservative Legislature and elected state

school superintendents who have sought to address the needs of a growing immigrant population with its need for language learning and its general lack of preparation for school success. These battles play out both in spending decisions and in educational policy. A protracted battle occurred in the first part of this century over new testing requirements for the awarding of high school diplomas—one of a planned series of actions to increase requirements for graduation. Low passage rates on the Arizona Instrument to Measure Standards (AIMS) test, especially in mathematics, prompted concerns among teachers and parents about whether the test was reasonable, whether schools had had enough time to implement a standards-based curriculum, and whether students had had enough opportunity to learn the material on which they were tested. The superintendent responded to these pressures by relaxing the timeline for the new standards, even as she emphasized that the standards would be a fixture of the educational policy landscape. In terms of the AIMS test, the upshot of the battle was a lowering of the passing score and a delay in including the test as a requirement for high school graduation.

State politics also affects attitudes toward the public universities and the level of support that the state is willing to provide. As one influential community member observed, “some of our legislators are not warm and fuzzy about what they think is taught in our universities.” Those feelings might predispose legislators to argue that the private benefits of higher education make it a lower priority than K–12 schools for public investment.

Governor Janet Napolitano, a Democrat, was first elected in 2002 and reelected in 2006.² She enjoys substantial support in an otherwise strongly conservative state, in part because of her ability to unite Arizonans behind her education agenda and link it solidly to the state’s economic future. The business community is a strong supporter of this education agenda, and is an important factor in preserving the bipartisan support for the governor’s agenda to reinvent Arizona through increased educational attainment.

THE BEGINNINGS OF THE P–20 COUNCIL

Governor Napolitano created the state’s P–20 Council by executive order in August 2005 (see Appendix A to this chapter), but the council had its roots in the business community.³ The Greater Phoenix Leadership (GPL), a member organization of leading private sector and civic chief executives, spearheaded an effort to draw attention to the

² Governor Napolitano has since been named U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security and has resigned as governor.

³ The governor issued a superseding Executive Order in 2008 that slightly altered the membership of the council and changed the wording so that the strategies to be considered by the council are more like intermediate outcomes. The new order calls for the status of the council to be reviewed no later than December 31, 2010.

serious underperformance of the state’s educational system. The mission of GPL is to engage the broader business community with the public and nonprofit sectors around policy issues for the betterment of the state. In its educational reform efforts, GPL enlisted the support of two other business leadership groups: the Southern Arizona Leadership Council and the Flagstaff Forty.

By 2003, members of Greater Phoenix Leadership became convinced that individual efforts to improve early childhood education, K–12 schools, and postsecondary education would fail if they were not integrated. That year, the GPL published *P–20: An Approach to Integrated Learning*, a report that, in effect, began the P–20 dialog statewide by clearly describing the P–20 concept through diagrams, benchmarks, and a statement of rationale:

“In recent years, there have been many significant efforts to improve our institutions of learning and address some root causes of student failure. There have been task force reports, blue ribbon committees, grass-root efforts at places of learning, but the effort remains disjointed, with diffused authority and lack of total commitment to a common goal that speaks with a clear articulated plan for education. K–12 education must be linked seamlessly with preschool and postsecondary education. These linkages between the stages of educational development must be better defined and smoothed out for the learner. P–20 offers an approach to achieving such an integrated learning system.”

According to Jim Zaharis, vice president of GPL, an additional goal at the time was to cultivate good civic stewards outside of the education system who would come to understand the key role that education plays in areas of their own self-interest as Arizonans. GPL sought common ground to accommodate the business community, which always seemed to be calling for reform, and the education community, which always seemed to “trump” the reform. “My task,” said Zaharis, “was to try to find a way to get a bigger tent.” GPL, under Zaharis’ guidance, marketed the P–20 concept to incoming Governor Napolitano, who “picked it up and ran with it.”

COUNCIL STRUCTURE AND OPERATIONS

The P–20 Council is large and highly structured. All 40 members are appointed by, and serve at the pleasure of, the governor. Members include the elected superintendent of public instruction, one member of the Board of Regents, the presidents of the three public universities, four community college representatives, four K–12 education representatives, four ex-officio members of the Arizona Legislature, a tribal representative, and representatives of parent and community organizations, workforce

and economic development, early education, career technical education, youth, the business community, and philanthropy.

At the time of our visit, the council was chaired by Governor Napolitano and co-chaired by Rufus Glasper, the chancellor of Maricopa Community Colleges. There are six standing and two ad hoc committees, the names of which indicate the council's priority areas:

- Education and Workforce Pathways
- Data and Graduation
- Teachers
- Education Alignment and Assessment
- Literacy
- Communications
- Early Education (ad hoc)
- Higher Education (ad hoc)

It is notable that, with the exception of the ad hoc committees, the structure is thematic rather than institutional—signaling a commitment to avoid recreating the silos that the council is intended to connect. Each committee has a designated chair and receives staff support from the governor's office. Committee membership can include those who are not members of the council.

A steering committee chaired by Chancellor Glasper consists of the chairs of the eight committees. Its charge is to make recommendations to the P-20 Council regarding priorities and strategies that will support the council in achieving its stated purpose to improve education in Arizona. The steering committee receives updates from all committees and makes sure their efforts are coordinated before presenting a committee's work to the full council. Although the executive order establishing the council declared that it meet at least quarterly, the council meets monthly, as do the steering committee and most of the other committees. The executive order also states that members may not send designees to represent them at meetings. Full meetings of the council are scheduled for two hours and are reportedly well attended by members and observers. Participation is balanced, with good engagement across the membership. One interviewee observed that despite the generally good and widespread participation, the "driving forces" are the universities, business, and the governor's office, adding that "if you have not gotten those three lined up, you have no hope of moving an agenda forward."

The council has a designated staff in the governor's office. Staff consists of an executive director and a second staff person, who is nearly full-time. In addition, the governor's two chief advisors for K-12 and higher education dedicate considerable portions of their time to the operation of the council. Staff time is spent organizing and staffing the council and its many committees, arranging for agenda items, developing

committee work plans, and following up on the many initiative and action items emanating from the council and its committees.

The council has a formal identity, captured in a logo and a set of brochures and other materials. There is a well-developed website for the council, with minutes and agendas posted for the council and committee meetings (see www.azgovernor.gov/P20/).

COUNCIL PRIORITIES

The published vision statement for the P–20 Council is that “every graduating student will be prepared for work and postsecondary education in the 21st century.” The stated goal is that “every young person who graduates from Arizona’s schools is truly prepared for a world of competition and innovation.” From the language of the executive order, it is clear the creation of the council was motivated by the need:

- To accommodate a population that is growing at twice the national average,
- To increase the college-going rate and bachelor’s degree production,
- To increase alignment and rigor across the educational spectrum to produce highly qualified workers for high-value jobs, and
- To achieve a more efficient and equitable education pipeline that keeps students on track at each stage.

In December 2006, the year following the creation of the council, a two-day strategic planning retreat was held for all council members. The retreat produced 32 recommendations which have become the agenda for the council. The recommendations emanated from the committees and most are detailed and multifaceted. Some of the recommendations address funding priorities and the creation of incentives, some suggest legislative action, and some call for further assessment or research. A final set of 35 recommendations was adopted by the council in June 2008. The full list can be found on the council website (www.azgovernor.gov/P20/).

Some of the key priorities, as expressed by interviewees during the case study visit, include:

- **Alignment.** Align high school standards and graduation requirements with postsecondary and workforce expectations, with a special emphasis on adopting a more rigorous standard for high school math and science.
- **Assessment.** Review methods of assessment, including the AIMS test and end-of-course exams, as a means of improving alignment across the education pipeline; achieve agreement about what constitutes college readiness—at community colleges and universities—and align assessments to those readiness standards.

- **Baccalaureate Production.** Study the demand for associate and baccalaureate degrees and the capacity to meet the demand, with attention to the transferability of credits across institutions and the prospects for expanding transfer pathways.
- **Career Technical Pathways.** Expand and improve alternative high school pathways by which students can obtain the skills needed for the workforce.
- **Teacher Quality.** Attract and retain high quality teachers through appropriate compensation and support, with special emphasis on increasing the supply of math and science teachers. (This recommendation references another governor’s committee—the Committee on Teacher Quality and Support—which has done considerable work on the topics assigned to the Teachers Committee of the P–20 Council).
- **Data System.** Continue to build a linked data system in accordance with National Data Quality Campaign standards, including the addition of the teacher identification component.
- **Communications.** Create and execute a communications plan, in partnership with foundation and business leaders, to build public awareness of the importance of education and coalesce public will for P–20 reform.

The communications plan warrants further discussion, since it is a very high priority of this council, which is not common among these kinds of councils across the country. The business and foundation leaders who serve on and support the council have been key supporters of the need for a strong public awareness campaign. Among these and other council members, there was a perceived need to change the culture surrounding education in the state. This applies both to families, who were perceived to be insufficiently inclined toward college, and to the business community, which has relied substantially on importing educated workers into the state. The public relations campaign was proposed as a means to communicate the new dimensions of the education challenge in Arizona and the urgency of improving the pipeline for educating the state’s own residents. In view of the state’s fiscally conservative political approach, the campaign was not-so-subtly aimed at ultimately increasing the state’s investment in education.

MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE COUNCIL

A full list of self-reported accomplishments appears on the council website and is included as Appendix B of this chapter. This section concentrates on those major accomplishments that were repeatedly cited by interviewees.

One accomplishment of the P–16 Council can be found in the state’s participation in the America Diploma Project (ADP), a national initiative operated by Achieve, Inc. The purpose of the America Diploma Project is to ensure that high school graduates are

prepared for work and postsecondary education by increasing high school class rigor and aligning curricula and standards. Although a council mechanism is not required for a state to participate in this project, respondents said that the council's support was crucial in convincing the state to join.

A second major accomplishment, cited by everyone interviewed, was the adoption of new high school graduation requirements by the Board of Education in December 2007. When the council was created, earning a high school diploma required just two years of science and two years of mathematics. Students in the class of 2013 will be required to take three years of science and four years of math. The minimum math requirement for high school graduation will increase from geometry to algebra II. Enacting this change was controversial due to concerns that it would increase high school dropout rates in an era of heightened accountability and that it would require school districts to hire more teachers in math and science at a time of severe budget constraints.

This council action is especially noteworthy because it says something about the power and structure of the body. When the item appeared before the council, there was only one opposition vote but it was a strong one—the elected superintendent of schools Tom Horne. Horne, a Republican and a former legislator, is said to be interested in a run for governor when his second term expires in 2010. Some believe that Governor Napolitano created the council, or at least has used it, as a way to have more influence over the K–12 agenda than is provided for under existing governance structures with an elected superintendent. A smaller council with less allegiance to the governor and fewer countervailing votes may not have prevailed over a powerful legislator.

A third accomplishment, cited by many, was the acquisition of substantial outside funds to develop and implement a public relations campaign. The campaign, under the name “Expect More Arizona,” was scheduled to begin in fall 2008. When the committee structure was first formed, the charge given to the Communications Committee was to communicate the work of the other committees. But, said Paul Luna, chair of the Communications Committee and executive director of the Helios Foundation:

“What started to become clearer to us was that at some level we have to educate the state to what the P–20 Council is and who we are and what we’re trying to do . . . and that our work was actually going to be a little more difficult than what was initially presented. Because P–20 is not really a term that everybody’s familiar with.”

Luna met with the governor's staff to convince them that the charge involved more “heavy lifting,” and got their endorsement of his effort to reach out to the foundation community for support. Four foundations each contributed \$50,000, and a professional firm was retained to build a communications strategy and a plan to implement it. The effort involves statewide media messages and an interactive website—

all aimed at motivating the public to change their own behaviors in seeking higher education and to build support for the P–20 agenda.

Another major accomplishment within the postsecondary sector, but aided by the P–20 framework, has been a redesign of higher education to increase access to the baccalaureate degree. This has involved better delineation of the missions of the three universities, alternative modes of delivery of upper division coursework to better match capacity with demand, and introduction of a 3-plus-1 pathway, whereby students complete their first three years of coursework at a community college and finish their final year at a university.

VALUE ADDED BY THE COUNCIL

An important purpose of this study of P–16 and P–20 councils is to understand if and how the council mechanism adds value to the work that would occur whether or not the council existed. This is a key question, because these councils are typically superimposed on existing agency structures and do not themselves hold the power to legislate or even to implement legislative or executive directives. The power of the Governor’s P–20 Council of Arizona, and similar councils of which we are aware, comes from its ability to influence the agenda of existing agencies and other organizations. The council has no ultimate authority, but is an advisory body that issues recommendations to the governor. As a result, the following question, as stated succinctly by Helios Foundation Director Paul Luna, becomes crucial in understanding the efficacy of the council mechanism: “If a council is purely advisory, can it really champion and sustain change over time?”

Although it is always speculative to consider whether or not a result or outcome would have occurred in the absence of the council, we heard a resounding consensus that the council has added considerable value to ongoing efforts to improve education policy in the state. This section describes the nature of the value added and offers some examples that were provided by respondents.

The Council Engages People Across Organizations and Sectors

Several people suggested that the council adds value by having “the right people at the right table.” (Some did offer, however, that the legislative involvement in council activities is not as strong as it could be and that some groups, like labor, have not yet been included.) With the large membership, people are able to share information across all education sectors as well as other stakeholder communities. One member noted that with 80% of the state’s population in the Phoenix/Tucson regions, the other parts of the state have traditionally been excluded from these kinds of conversations, but that the council has successfully involved rural communities. Another pointed to the benefits of monthly gatherings in that members can discuss other mutual business beyond what is on the formal agenda.

In describing the benefits of sharing information across organizational boundaries, Karen Nicodemus, president of Cochise College, said: “I am a much better college president for being on the State Board of Education and being engaged with the P–20 Council.” She added that by bringing people together, the council has been able to build alliances that can then help to move agendas forward. As an example, she cited work on the alignment of math standards, for which her Alignment Committee brought together community college faculty, university faculty, and representatives from the Department of Education and the business community to work with partners from Achieve. Roy Flores, chancellor of Pima Community College District, stated the benefits as follows: “Once you get those folks together and give them a clear direction and constraints and time lines, good things are going to happen.”

The Council Raises Public Expectations

Chancellor Flores made a key distinction, however, between the P–20 Council of Arizona and other state P–16 forums with which he is familiar. He said that the real value of the council derives not just from bringing people together but from building expectations based on their meetings. Getting together “might make you feel good,” he said, but by itself it does not accomplish anything that cannot be achieved with a phone call. He indicated that the P–20 Council of Arizona is different because, as a public forum, it brings expectations for action. This is what council members hear, he said:

“ ‘These are the problems, this is what the data show, these are the things that you want to work on, these are my expectations . . . and I’m taking some of these to the Legislature, and I’m sending a letter to the state superintendent and the board, saying these are my expectations, and I’m calling a press conference.’ ”

He added that “it’s one thing for two people to get together and have a good idea” but it’s another to hear “this is what the Legislature or the governor is expecting.”

Other members had similar views. Michael Crow, president of Arizona State University, said the authority of the council derives from its being a public forum—which makes it more effective than if it had more formal authority but less public presence. President Nicodemus said that when, as a member, you publicly support an action, there is an assumption that you have agreed to take it back to your decision-making body and try to move it forward. Because there is regular staff follow-up in meetings, it is likely that members will be called upon to report back to the council on their own follow-up.

The Council Fosters the Development of Common Agendas

The council can accomplish its goals and priorities only if the participating agencies take actions through their own regular channels to support the council’s objectives. The council is not a state agency and cannot directly implement educational policy. Yet all

interviewees agreed that the council is directly responsible for much of the movement that is occurring in the improvement of educational policy in the state.

Many respondents attributed this progress to having so many council members communicating with and learning from one another. Jim Zaharis of Greater Phoenix Leadership has observed “people who did not used to talk to each other about these topics” coming together around a common agenda, beginning to know each other face to face, and then “coming to a common identification of the issues and the problem” and “rowing the boat in the same direction.” President Crow provided an example, noting that “we would not be at the point we are in understanding the connection between high school graduation requirements and university admission requirements without the council.” With the involvement of council members representing so many organizations, he said, the council “gives us a whole different set of dynamics that doesn’t exist in any other forum.”

Several respondents noted that the increase in high school graduation requirements would not have occurred without the council. John Haeger, President of Northern Arizona University, said that the business groups on the council were instrumental in “tempering reactions” of local communities against raising the graduation standards. Were it left up to the Department of Education and the usual political forces, he said, the change would not have happened.

These comments suggest that the council has helped to create a dynamic that appears similar to a tipping point, where peer pressure acts to sustain momentum for change and improvement. President Haeger noted that there have been times when someone could have spoken up to kill an idea but no one has taken that step—probably because “the council has a lot of support and momentum and they don’t want to be the one responsible for derailing it.”

The development of common agendas across institutions can translate into real influence, even in a body that lacks formal power. For example, the council does not lobby the Legislature as a council, but to the extent that the individual agencies are on the same page, their individual lobbying can be more effective. As another example, Luna pointed to the council’s role in framing education around a common agenda. He suggested that competing messages can often lead to public confusion and disengagement. By assisting in eliminating some competing messages, the council has the potential to change public attitudes about education.

The Council Enhances the Impact of its Members

Respondents offered several examples of the council’s ability to expand its impact beyond the reach of its own members and participating agencies. One example is the council’s success in engaging philanthropy in assisting it to reach its goals. In terms of philanthropic investment in education, Zaharis said that Arizona had received far less than many other states, particularly compared with states in the Eastern United States.

The last few years, however, have seen a substantial increase to the point where “philanthropy has become the angel investors for education.” The Arizona Community Foundation—a statewide partnership of donors and nonprofit organizations—has picked up the mantle of education reform. In *Educating Arizona* (2008), the foundation referenced and built upon many of the council’s recommendations.

On a smaller scale, President Crow credited the council with enhancing his ability to advance his goals within his institution, because, as a result of the existence of the council, “I can say ‘we’re doing this’ and it’s not debatable.” Susie DePrez, the parent representative on the P–20 Council, provided an example of how the council has added value by transforming many local initiatives into broader statewide policy initiatives. Local partnerships can work for years on small-scale projects and grants, she suggested. Through the statewide efforts of the council, however, many local initiatives receive the boost that they need to have broader impact.

Co-chair Glasper provided a useful summary of the views of many interviewees concerning the value that the council has brought to the educational landscape in Arizona. He pointed out that the council has worked diligently to emphasize a statewide approach to educational reform and improvement—rather than deferring to the various interests of the individual institutions. That is one of the key educational challenges that faces most states today, where the sum of the individual interests of institutions is unlikely to match the pressing educational and economic needs of residents across the state.

BARRIERS TO GREATER SUCCESS

Despite these many endorsements of the value added by the P–20 Council, many interviewees set the bar for measuring the ultimate success of the council far higher than the achievements reached to date. Paul Luna said he would judge success by whether the state culture for education changes such that Arizonans’ votes and the state’s funding patterns improve support for public education. According to Michael Crow, success will also require that people understand that public education includes pre-kindergarten through graduate work (P–20), not just kindergarten through high school (K–12). Several others observed that it was too soon to judge the success of the council because change is happening, but at a slow pace.

When asked about the barriers that were interfering with the council’s work, interviewees had much less to say than they did about its accomplishments. The barriers cited fell into the five areas identified below.

The Difficulty of the Task

Improving educational outcomes in the face of budget limitations, a growing student body underprepared for college, and complex governance structures is no small task. The collection of 32 recommendations generated by the eight committees (now up to 35 as

adopted by the council) is as overwhelming as it is ambitious. In terms of K–12 education, the state has been among the lowest performers for a long time, and council members realize that it will not be easy to reverse this trend—or to convert high rates of college participation into high rates of degree completion. Adding to the difficulty of the task are political tensions within a complex educational governance structure. With an elected superintendent of public instruction sometimes holding different viewpoints than the governor, the council can become a venue for political as well as educational battles, as was the case in increasing high school graduation requirements.

Lack of Public Support

Achieving success in reaching the council’s goals will require a full-scale culture change in Arizona regarding public support for education. According to interviewees, families need to become more aware of the economic and other benefits of high school and college completion. In addition, the public at large needs to understand the benefits of increased investments in education for all Arizonans at a time of increasing diversification of the population. Legislators need to value the *public* as well as *private* benefits of higher education. Council members are aware that, in spite of its inclusion of so many stakeholders, the council is still not well known—even, for example, among local school superintendents. One member spoke of the need for the council to travel the state and hold town hall meetings to increase public awareness of the council and support for its agenda.

Insufficient Resources

Surprisingly, there was not widespread pessimism among interviewees about the impact of severe budget constraints on the ability of the council to continue its work. Budget constraints were mentioned by several people but not in relation to preventing the council from making progress. One issue that was mentioned frequently involved the budget challenges facing schools as they sought to hire additional math and science teachers to meet the new high school graduation requirements. As the new requirements were universally viewed as a major accomplishment of the council, it is understandable that lack of funds to implement them would be viewed as a serious barrier. In addition, funds are also needed to implement a variety of the council’s recommended initiatives—and the challenges of working within existing funding constraints were cited by some respondents as making the council’s work more difficult. One member suggested that the problem is not only a lack of resources but also a lack of knowledge or ability in determining how best to use available resources.

Too Many Priorities

Several council members cited, as a barrier to success, a perceived overabundance of good ideas and a lack of focus on top priorities. One member referred to a “laundry list”

of initiatives and suggested that the governor does not want to set priorities because that would make some people unhappy. He said that although these kinds of groups generally do not like to make anyone unhappy, this needs to happen if the council is to articulate what Arizona's higher educational system should look like five to ten years from now—or “do we want to continue to have the same discussion, which we had,” he said, “since I have been in the state?” He said the governor could push forward the conversation, even though it might make some people unhappy. He added, however, “If I was governor, I don't think I would want to do that. She is in a tough spot.”

SUSTAINABILITY

The last and probably largest barrier facing the council that was discussed during the case study interviews concerned how to sustain the P-20 council after the expiration of the governor's term; this issue was on everyone's minds during our interviews.⁴ Since this is a major issue that warrants its own discussion, it is addressed here in detail. Several of the key participants were concerned that the momentum that the council has built could be in jeopardy after 2010. Others were more hopeful, citing the strong support that the council enjoys from a broad base of stakeholders as a force for sustainability. Respondents discussed the following three models for addressing the sustainability of the council.

Continue under Executive Order

One option discussed was to wait for a new governor and hope that the executive order would be renewed. The existing executive order calls for a review of the status of the council no later than December 31, 2010. Some advocates of the council agenda perceived this as a viable strategy. One member said, “If the new governor didn't emphasize it, council members would push for it.” Others said this was risky because they view Governor Napolitano's strong commitment as critical to the council's effectiveness. For these individuals, it was questionable whether the council could maintain its stature and impact under a governor who was less than fully committed to the current arrangement. As one member noted, “you can't force a governor to care about something.” Several members voiced the opinion that at some point the council needs to be seen as Arizona's agenda—not the governor's.

Put the Council in Statute

Several interviewees discussed the possibility of authorizing the council through statute, but there were variants of this idea, primarily having to do with the degree of authority a

⁴ The situation has now changed significantly with a new governor in place, but the concerns that prevailed during our case study remain relevant to the question of the sustainability of all such councils.

new entity would have with respect to existing agencies, such as the Department of Education, the Board of Regents, and individual colleges and universities. No one appeared to support the idea of a “super-board” agency as a workable solution. Some interviewees pointed to Florida’s failed experiment with a P–20 governing structure as proof. Others noted that politically, a super board would not be feasible, given the existing statutory and, in the case of the Board of Regents, constitutional authority of existing entities. Another respondent said that if the council were a state agency, it would be viewed with suspicion and less respect than it now has.

Another statutory approach would be to codify the council as an advisory body rather than as a state agency, which would continue its current mode of operation but with a statutory guarantee beyond 2010. This option might avoid the pitfalls of creating a new agency, but it would still require the passage of new legislation, which many interviewees doubted would occur, because of the partisan divide between the Legislature and Governor Napolitano. One member noted that the split between branches of state government was not only motivated by partisanship but also by resentment over the governor’s power and public approval on education issues. According to this individual, the governor had “co-opted” the economic development agenda normally pushed by Republicans and business to the point where “business thinks the governor has the best ideas.” This has led to resentment in the Republican-controlled Legislature to the point where “we worry that the Legislature will want to dismantle the council.”

Establish the Council Outside of Government

According to interviewees, the Greater Phoenix Leadership, which was one of the primary supporters in creating the council, was considering options to establish the council as a nongovernmental entity. Under this plan, which was still under development and consideration, the existing entities with constitutional or statutory authority—the Board of Regents and the Board of Education—would need to agree on an agenda for the council and “in essence give their authority” for the council to pursue that agenda. Whether this would be feasible and how it would work was not yet determined. What was clear, however, was that the Greater Phoenix Leadership was exploring ways to sustain the work of the council without seeking the approval of the Legislature. What was also clear from the discussions was that the state faces difficult choices in preserving the council mechanism across a gubernatorial transition.

OBSERVATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

This section offers observations about the ability of the Governor’s P–20 Council of Arizona to promote educational alignment and a reform agenda, and suggests some of the key policy themes that emerged from this study. The observations are based on a review of summary information collected on P–16 and P–20 councils across the country by the

Education Commission of the States (ECS) and the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education. They are also based on the experience gained from the other two in-depth case studies completed for this project, which examined P-16 and P-20 councils in Kentucky and Rhode Island.

Especially given its relative youth, the P-20 Council of Arizona—having been in existence just three years—provides some hopeful lessons for the design of such councils. There appear to be several factors, in particular, that have supported its effectiveness.

Leadership

Everyone we spoke with agreed that strong and consistent support from the governor, who chaired the council, was important to its gaining stature and influence. There were some disadvantages to the council being so heavily identified with one elected official, but the experience clearly demonstrated the value of strong leadership from a high position of authority. Since these councils are almost certain to be advisory rather than policymaking bodies, it appears that they must provide advice *to someone in a position of authority* for their recommendations to be taken seriously by stakeholders.

Staffing

Based on our conversations, it appears that the council in Arizona enjoys an extraordinary level of staff support compared with other councils. It is difficult to distinguish this staff support from the support of the governor, since the four professionals staffing the council were assigned from the governor's office. Nevertheless, it appears that the level of staffing helped to explain why this council was able to meet frequently, manage a diverse agenda and large number of participants, and, most importantly, follow up on recommendations and assignments so that participating agencies felt accountable for taking actions based on council recommendations. Co-chair Glasper described the staff as being able to “connect the dots” due to their participation in pertinent committee meetings, community meetings, foundation meetings, and educational board meetings. The staff, for example, helped to keep the council focused on the big picture concerning how each sector's actions affected another's. This level of engagement could not have occurred with more limited staffing.

Structure and Composition

On balance, the large size of the council, *in conjunction with a tight structure*, appears to be a strength of the Arizona approach. If there were fewer staff members and less extensive commitments by key individuals to staff and operate the many constituent committees, the large membership could be dysfunctional. As it is organized, however, with university presidents and business CEOs leading the committees, and with the steering committee helping to manage council priorities, the large membership brings

significant strength to the process by expanding stakeholder engagement and commitment. Although legislative participation on the council is not as extensive as many would like, the council appears to benefit from involving both branches of state government. As an advisory group, the council has to find champions to move its agenda forward—and support from the governor’s office has been crucial, as well as support from state agencies and institutions represented on the council. When legislation is needed, legislative participation on the council can help to increase buy-in and support of the council’s agenda in the Legislature. For example, legislators who are on the council can help to prevent council members who may have been outvoted on an issue from lobbying effectively against the majority council opinion.

Business and Philanthropy

It would be difficult to visit the state and study the council without being impressed by the amount of support that the business and philanthropic communities have offered to the council. In addition to financial support, these groups provide a high level of intellectual and moral support, which is crucial in contributing to the council’s achievements. After seeing this, it is difficult to imagine a state council that could be effective without engaging these groups deeply.

Data and Policy Knowledge

Arizona may well set the gold standard for a state’s use of available resources from national educational policy organizations. Its participation in special studies with and use of data from the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE), the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS), and Achieve have been important factors in the council’s ability to set forth a clear agenda—albeit perhaps an overly ambitious one. Specifically, the council has been guided by the philosophy that its educational agenda is best accomplished by clearly articulating the needs of the state and the roles of the various educational institutions in meeting those needs. This can be seen in the cross-cutting (as opposed to institutional) designation of committees and in the commitment to data-driven decision making, in which data are used to help council members understand *statewide* patterns of supply and demand for education.

Use of Policy Levers to Close the Divide

In *The Governance Divide*, the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education described the deep divisions between the K–12 and higher education systems in the states, as well as some of their effects on educational attainment (Venezia et al. 2005). In a follow-up report, *Claiming Common Ground*, the National Center identified four policy levers that states can use to close the divide between K–12 and higher education, and thereby achieve better educational outcomes (Callan et al. 2006). These policy levers

include: alignment of curricula and assessments; fiscal incentives; linked data systems; and accountability that reaches across sectors. A central purpose of this study is to determine whether P–16 and P–20 council mechanisms are, or can be, effective means of bridging the divide, applying these policy tools, and otherwise carrying out this agenda.

The Arizona case suggests that even among the more successful P–16 councils, it may be some time before we see effective use of all four policy levers. Of the four levers, alignment of curricula and assessments has been the chief focus in Arizona. Even in this area, however, the largest accomplishment was in raising high school graduation requirements, which is only a first step in a complex alignment process. The council has taken another step for mathematics in its work to align high school standards with college readiness standards. In addition, the council has plans to extend this work to the English curriculum. Nonetheless, the substantial work of aligning assessments to the standards and standardizing them across institutions has not occurred. Like many states, Arizona has not determined how to use the various types of assessments—high school exit, end of course, college entrance—in ways that support the standards that are being aligned across sectors.

There has been less attention focused on the use of fiscal incentives to encourage the development of more efficient transitions for students as they advance from one institution to another along their educational path. One key accomplishment was the enactment of legislation (SB 1069 in 2007) that established the early graduation scholarship program, which provided \$2,000 of financial aid to students who graduated early from high school and moved promptly into a postsecondary institution. On a grander scale, there is the assumption, expressed by council Co-chair Glasper, that the council will eventually develop a funding model that better aligns financial incentives with the goals that have been set for the state.

The council has made good use of aggregated data to understand the condition of education in the state and to identify unmet needs, including those in the workforce. However, the development of a linked data system has not been a focus of the council.

Accountability for results across sectors has been addressed indirectly through the council. There has been no movement toward building a formal structure of data-driven accountability for P–20 education. However, representatives from K–12 schools and colleges and universities appear to be held accountable publicly for their pursuit of the council’s agenda. As in other states, the distinctions between *institutional* accountability and *student* accountability have not been sorted out clearly. The political disagreements around using the results of the state AIMS (Arizona’s Instrument to Measure Standards) test as a high school graduation requirement illustrate this issue. In opposing the high-stakes use of the test, parents and teachers feared that students would be held accountable for failing the exam when accountability appropriately belongs with the institutions, or more broadly with the state, for not providing sufficient resources or appropriate curricula that could enable the students to succeed.

The ability of the Governor’s P–20 Council in Arizona to adopt these four policy levers is limited because their authority is limited. Just as they can only advise the governor about her agenda, they can only advise the governor about *how* to accomplish it. It may be too soon to conclude whether the council will be able to move beyond the “what” of determining the agenda to the “how” of implementing it—especially until its sustainability is settled.

Appendix A to Chapter Four

EXECUTIVE ORDER 2005-26
ESTABLISHING THE GOVERNOR'S P-20 COUNCIL OF ARIZONA
(Amending and Superseding Executive Order 2005-19)

WHEREAS, a healthy economy and individual earning potential depends on the quality and availability of education from preschool through adulthood; and

WHEREAS, Arizona's population continues to grow at nearly double the national average, placing greater demand on the state's public elementary, secondary and post-secondary institutions; and

WHEREAS, Arizona employers and educators alike recognize the importance of well-aligned, rigorous educational opportunities to create a workforce that is qualified for high-value jobs that can sustain Arizona's economy and fast-growing service needs into the future; and

WHEREAS, currently only one-third of all college age Arizonans enroll in two or four-year post-secondary institutions, only 50% of those enrolled complete a Bachelors degree, and these statistics place Arizona well below the national average; and

WHEREAS, improved access to and completion of higher education may require new, affordable and more flexible ways of delivering degree programs among and between community colleges and universities; and

WHEREAS, communities, employers and educators across Arizona have begun looking at new ways to address educational rigor and preparation for post-secondary training and college; and

WHEREAS, enhanced student achievement in elementary, secondary and post-secondary institutions, as well as in the workplace, requires a comprehensive, statewide approach to education that ensures opportunities for individual success from pre-school through post-secondary education;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Janet Napolitano, Governor of the State of Arizona, by virtue of the power vested in me by the Constitution and the laws of this State, do hereby create the Governor's P-20 Council of Arizona (the "P-20 Council") and order as follows:

(1) The P-20 Council shall consist of an appropriate number of members to represent the education and workplace communities. The Governor or her designee shall Chair the P-20 Council and appoint all members who shall serve without compensation. Membership shall include but not be limited to the following:

- Not more than four members of the Arizona State Legislature who will serve as ex-officio members;
- The Superintendent of Public Instruction or his designee;
- A Member of the Arizona Board of Regents who is a member of the Joint Conference Committee (JCC);
- Arizona's three State University Presidents;

- Not more than four Community College Representatives, of which at least one shall be a member of the JCC, one shall be a rural community college representative, and one shall be an urban community college representative.
 - Two Superintendents of a Joint Technological Education District, of which at least one shall be a representative of a rural district and one shall be a representative of an urban district;
 - Three P–12 Education representatives, of which at least one shall represent a middle school or junior high school, one shall represent a high school, and one shall represent a charter school;
 - A Member of the Arizona State Board of Education;
 - A Representative of a four-year, private post-secondary institution;
 - A Representative of the Governor’s Council on Innovation and Technology;
 - A Representative of the Governor’s Council on Workforce Policy;
 - Not more than eight members of the public representing parent groups, business and industry;
 - A Representative of the Governor’s School Readiness Board;
 - A Representative actively engaged in high school dropout prevention programs or policy;
 - A Student Representative of a high school or post-secondary institution;
 - A Tribal Representative;
 - Not more than two locally elected officials.
- (2) The P–20 Council shall explore ways Arizona can achieve a more effective, efficient and equitable education pipeline through some or all of the following strategies:
- Aligning high school, college, and work expectations to meet industry-specific skill sets in high growth, high-skill occupations that will bring economic prosperity and diversity to Arizona.
 - Helping students at all levels meet higher standards and prepare for formal education and workforce training beyond high school.
 - Giving all students the excellent teachers and leaders that they need, particularly in the areas of math, science and literacy.
 - Strengthening high school and postsecondary accountability systems to better prepare students for college and increase enrollment and completion rates.
 - Improving middle school and elementary school standards to ensure high school preparedness for math and science.
 - Ensuring clear pathways for all students to obtain college degrees, regardless of point of entry.
 - Assessing the need to expand four-year degree programs at post-secondary institutions.
- (3) Members shall serve for staggered terms of one or two years. Members shall not serve more than two consecutive terms.

- (4) Members, unless otherwise indicated, may not send designees to represent them at the Council meetings. Members who miss more than three consecutive council meetings are subject to replacement at the sole discretion of the Governor.
- (5) The Chairperson may form an executive committee or other committees as necessary.
- (6) The Council shall meet to conduct its affairs at least four times each year at various locations across the state.
- (7) The status of the Council shall be reviewed no later than December 31, 2006 to determine appropriate action for its continuance, modification or termination.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused to be affixed the Great Seal of Arizona.

Janet Napolitano
Governor

Done at the Capitol in Phoenix on this 5th day of October in the Year Two Thousand and Five and of the Independence of the United States of America the Two Hundred and Thirtieth.

ATTEST:

Janice K. Brewer
Secretary of State

ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE P–20 COUNCIL

Governor Napolitano and her P–20 Council have been the impetus for planning and garnering support for many policy changes in the state’s education system. The following accomplishments were drawn from the council’s website.

Education Alignment and Assessment

- Recommended that the Arizona State Board of Education (SBE) increase high school graduation requirements from two years of mathematics to four, and from two years of science to three. In following the council’s recommendations, the SBE increased the number of mathematics and science credits needed for graduation. In mathematics, Arizona high school students were required to reach the level of geometry previously; under the new requirements, all Arizona high school graduates will be required to reach the level of algebra II.
- Provided recommendations to increase the rigor of the mathematics standard, which included developing new language for 11th to 12th grades and a bridge to college-level academic work. The P–20 Council is working to develop recommendations for Arizona’s English language arts standard.
- Working to implement the algebra II end of course assessment by May 2008. The first administration of this exam was expected to occur in many of the 15 partner states by that time.
- Commissioned the report, *From Education to Work: Is Arizona Prepared? The Alignment Project Report*, in 2006. This report provided baseline data for many of the council’s recommendations.
- Facilitated discussions and meetings with and between the Arizona Board of Regents and the State Board of Education to address alignment of K–12 curriculum, assessments, and graduation requirements in order to better prepare students for postsecondary education and the workforce.
- Engaged education policy boards in the work of the P–20 Council. Representatives from First Things First (Arizona’s early childhood board), the State Board of Education (K–12) and the Arizona Board of Regents (public higher education) are members of the P–20 Council. Each group provides an update at each P–20 Council meeting.

Teachers

- Completed the report, *Strengthening Teacher Quality and Support: Next Steps for Arizona*, and integrated its recommendations into its work (2007). Following up on the report’s recommendations, Governor Napolitano included teacher pay raises—\$100 million and \$46 million, respectively—in her fiscal year 2006 and 2007 budgets.

- Governor Napolitano's fiscal year 2008 budget included \$4.75 million in grants for STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) teachers and related activities. The State Board of Education received \$2.5 million to promote improved student achievement in math or science by providing supplemental funding for innovative programs. The Arizona Board of Regents received \$2.25 million for scholarships to attract, graduate and retain more teachers in STEM disciplines.
- The governor was expected to build and fund a new, centrally located STEM center that would improve and align STEM education in Arizona to ensure that all Arizona students are prepared to meet the demands of the 21st Century. The STEM center will provide innovative programs, research, training, and communications to assist the state in its STEM education and teaching reform efforts.

Education and Workforce Pathways

- Recommended that the Arizona Department of Education and the State Board of Education implement personalized graduation plans for students. SBE adopted Education and Career Action Plans (ECAPS), which were expected to be required for the entering freshmen of 2009.
- Partnered in hosting the state's first summit on 21st Century skills in October 2007.
- Working to enhance the academic content within Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs of study, in partnership with the Arizona Department of Education. It was expected that the CTE and mathematics standards would be aligned beginning in spring 2008.
- The Legislature created an early college scholarship program that provides grants for students graduating early to attend a postsecondary institution (2007).

Literacy

- Provided scholarships ranging from \$1,500 to \$2,000 for teachers to attain the state Reading Endorsement.
- Created and distributed literacy toolkits for Arizona 4th, 5th and 6th grade teachers through the support of a National Governors Association grant (2008).
- Hosted three regional Adolescent Literacy Forums through the support of a National Governors Association grant (2007).
- Worked with the Alliance for Excellence in Education in the preparation and presentation of the report, *Improving Adolescent Literacy in Arizona* (2005). The report provided a baseline for the work of the Literacy Committee.

Data and Graduation

- Recommended that the Arizona Department of Education and the State Board of Education (SBE) implement personalized graduation plans. SBE has adopted Education and Career Action Plans (ECAPS), which were expected to be required for the entering freshmen of 2009.
- In 2005 the governor signed the National Governors Association's Compact on State High School Graduation Data. The compact committed the state to taking steps to implement a

standard definition for a four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate. The Arizona Department of Education has implemented this definition.

- Working to ensure implementation of the 10 Essential Elements of a Longitudinal Data System.⁵ Elements 1, 2, 3, 8, 10 have been implemented. Elements 4, 7, and 9 were in the process of being implemented or the state had the ability to implement them. The committee was working aggressively to effect the implementation of elements 5 and 6.
- Adopted a goal to increase the graduation rate by 12% by the year 2012.

Higher Education

- Commissioned *A Feasibility and Demand Study for the State of Arizona* to identify gaps in access to degrees in all parts of the state. This work has resulted in several collaborative planning efforts, including Arizona Board of Regents, the Arizona Legislature and the P–20 Council.
- Governor Napolitano’s final budget (2007) included an increase in the state contribution to the Arizona Financial Aid Trust.
- Governor Napolitano’s final budget (2007) included increased funding for the private postsecondary grant program.

Communications

- Working to launch a public awareness campaign in fall 2008. This effort was expected to include major foundations, agencies and stakeholders in a coordinated campaign to raise public awareness of the importance of increasing educational alignment and attainment in making Arizona more globally competitive. The campaign, named “Expect More Arizona,” was expected to have a significant paid and free media presence across the state. It was also expected to include an interactive website integrating diverse educational information through one portal.

P–20 Council–Related Legislation

- SB 1512 (signed by governor in 2006) provided \$2.5 million additional funding for the Arizona Department of Education to continue development of Arizona’s data system.
- SB 1045 (signed by governor in 2006) required integration of K–12 student identifier numbers at public universities and community colleges.
- HB 2206 (bill stalled but language included in final budget, 2007). A \$2.25 million teacher student loan program was created to encourage more teachers to enter the fields of mathematics, science and special education.
- SB 1069 (signed by governor in 2007) established the early graduation scholarship program, which was designed to provide an incentive (financial aid of up to \$2,000) for students to graduate early from high school and promptly move into postsecondary education.

⁵ See <http://dataqualitycampaign.org/survey/elements>.

Chapter Five
Kentucky's P-16 Council

Nancy B. Shulock

Only our institutions of higher education can equip our people with the knowledge and skills which will make us productive in this new economy. . . I challenge you to articulate a new vision, propose a new method, show me a system more devoted to innovation than it is to turf, more concerned about the big picture than it is about its own place in that picture, and I'll work with you to find the money to do the job. We must have a system of higher education which is more responsive, more efficient, and more relevant to today's realities and tomorrow's needs. Our people deserve no less, and I will accept no less.

—Former Governor Paul Patton of Kentucky
Inaugural Address, December 12, 1995

Kentucky is a state of fierce regional loyalties, and the regional universities are a major part of that feeling of loyalty.

—Dick Wilson, Former Capital Bureau Chief
Louisville Courier-Journal

The tension between state needs and regional prerogatives has shaped Kentucky's pioneering efforts in education reform and its nine-year experience with its P-16 Council. This chapter, based on a case study of Kentucky,¹ begins by describing the political and policy context for the establishment of the Kentucky P-16 Council, including the educational reform initiatives that were adopted prior to the council's

¹ The case study research was conducted by a team of five individuals, under the leadership of the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education. The team interviewed 14 individuals in a site visit conducted March 10–11, 2008. Interviewees included legislators and representatives of the Kentucky Department of Education, the Kentucky Education Cabinet, the Council on Postsecondary Education, the Education Professional Standards Board, and the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce. The author, a member of the team, supplemented interview data with an extensive review of available reports and documents. The information reflects a snapshot in time. Except as otherwise noted, all information and activities are presented as of the time of the research.

creation in 1999. It describes current education performance issues and challenges facing Kentucky, and identifies emergent outcomes of the ambitious reform efforts. In the remainder of the chapter, I examine the role of the P-16 Council in contributing to those outcomes and, more generally, to the development of an efficient education system that meets state needs, consistent with former Governor Paul Patton's vision. Topics include the structure and operation of the council, its priorities, its accomplishments, and shortcomings, as assessed by council participants. Finally, I offer conclusions about the capacity of Kentucky's council mechanism to integrate its various reform efforts and align the education sectors to help produce a more competitive state economy.

THE CONTEXT OF POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION REFORM

Governor Patton took office in 1995 committed to an agenda of education reform. To that end he created a Task Force on Higher Education, which engaged the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS) to assess higher education performance in the state and assist the Task Force in making its recommendations. Among the findings reported by NCHEMS were the following challenges facing the state in designing an efficient and responsive education system:

- Low educational attainment and high levels of adult illiteracy;
- High dropout rates from high school that contribute to the adult illiteracy problem;
- Low college-going rates out of high school;
- Low rates of retention, transfer, and degree completion among college attendees;
- Low degree production in specialties critical to the new economy;
- A highly fragmented and underfunded network of community colleges, technical institutes, and university two-year programs that is largely disconnected from regional educational and economic priorities;
- No clearly defined mission for community or technical colleges to serve the undereducated adult population; and
- Unproductive competition among universities and poor research performance in areas critical to the new economy (McGuinness 2002).

The NCHEMS report cited some major barriers to improving these conditions. Among these are two factors that are very relevant to an examination of the Kentucky P-16 Council:

- A system driven by the interests of institutions and "plagued by political and turf battles" rather than guided by the needs of the people and the state's economy; and

- The lack of an effective structure for statewide policy leadership to coordinate efforts of diverse institutions.

As referenced in the quotation at the start of this chapter by Dick Wilson, former capital bureau chief of the *Louisville Courier-Journal*, Kentucky has a strong culture of place—of region—which contributes to the challenge of harnessing institutions around statewide goals. Moreover, the economic and regional diversity of the state is reflected in huge discrepancies across regions in measures of preparation for, participation in, and success in postsecondary education. Efforts to build a system around state needs have proceeded with careful consideration of regional differences.

Governor Patton sought no less than a conversion of an economy that had been based on tobacco, coal mining, bourbon, and horse racing to one with medical, pharmaceutical, and other high-tech industries. More so than many other states working to increase college graduates, Kentucky needed to create the kinds of jobs that would keep college-educated individuals from moving out of state. Its challenge was to increase both the supply of, and the demand for, individuals with postsecondary credentials in fields demanded by the new economy.

Patton, a Democrat, took office when K–12 reform was in full swing. In the early 1980s, a group of concerned business leaders, parents, and advocates came together to form the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence, a nonprofit citizens' advocacy organization that still exists today. Their purpose was to advocate for the improvement of an educational system that was performing toward the bottom of the 50 states. Their efforts, along with a ruling by the Kentucky Supreme Court that the public schools were offering inequitable educational opportunities, led to the passage of the Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA) by the state General Assembly in 1990. This sweeping legislation revamped Kentucky's education system in the areas of finance, governance, and curriculum in an attempt to provide equal educational opportunities for all of Kentucky's children regardless of the property wealth of the district in which they lived. It raised educational standards, introduced new approaches to statewide assessment, and created additional support systems for teachers, families, and students.

Earlier efforts to reform postsecondary education during this period had been unsuccessful. The successful passage of K–12 reform legislation set the stage for the ambitious postsecondary education reform legislation that followed seven years later. Governor Patton assumed office in 1995, declaring that reform in postsecondary education would be his top priority. In 1997 he won bipartisan support in the Legislature for major reforms to help Kentucky increase educational attainment in the interest of moving the state toward a more modern and competitive economy. House Bill 1 (HB 1), also known as the Kentucky Postsecondary Education Improvement Act, made key organizational and governance changes, established several trust funds to finance various reforms, and set performance goals to be achieved by 2020. The key governance provisions were as follows:

- The Council on Postsecondary Education (CPE) was created to replace the Council on Higher Education and was charged with developing a strategic agenda to achieve the goals of HB 1 and developing and submitting a biennial budget request for postsecondary education that would align resources with goals.
- A new Kentucky Community and Technical College System (KCTCS) was created by removing all but one of the 14 community colleges from control of the University of Kentucky, removing the 15 technical colleges from the state bureaucracy, and merging them.
- The Strategic Committee on Postsecondary Education (SCOPE) was created, consisting of representatives from the governor’s office, the House of Representatives, the Senate, and the CPE, to serve as a public forum to exchange ideas about the future of higher education and to advise the CPE in the discharge of its new responsibilities.

Through his support for this major structural reform, Governor Patton signaled his willingness to use some political capital to bring more centralized focus to postsecondary education. The battle to remove the community colleges from university control was politically charged and ultimately led to the departure of the university president, Charles Wethington, who had opposed a number of the governor’s key reforms. Wethington was replaced by a supporter of the reform agenda. In addition, the governor made strong appointments to key posts, including making strategic appointments to the CPE and selecting Gordon Davies as its first president. The CPE was created to have considerable authority and to report directly to the governor (outside of the education cabinet).

Another major reform followed shortly thereafter. In 2000, the Kentucky Adult Education Act placed adult education within the CPE. The purpose of this shift was to elevate the priority of adult education and the importance of its students in meeting the goals of HB 1.

In the decade from 1990 to 2000, then, the Kentucky Legislature enacted three major reforms—in K–12, postsecondary, and adult education. Each reform was ambitious. Together they created a major challenge for the state’s leaders to pursue the goals of each reform within the context of building a seamless K–16 education system to increase education levels and spur economic growth.

The next several years saw tremendous activity in implementing the reform agenda—activity that spanned three different governors as well as transitions in leadership of the newly created CPE. Democratic Governor Patton served a second term, until 2003. Higher education spending increased substantially in the first few years of the reforms, but in 2001 the economy soured and higher education budgets were cut three years in a row. The most notable of his investments was in the “Bucks for Brains” initiative, which channeled significant new money into endowed chairs and

professorships at the state's two research and six regional universities, thereby helping to attract talented faculty and increase research funding. In addition, HB 1 created several trust funds that directed increased funding to support a variety of reforms.

Another notable and nationally lauded initiative was the establishment of a public agenda for higher education that encouraged the institutions to work together toward the common purpose of improving educational attainment levels and the quality of life of Kentuckians. The public agenda is focused on five simple questions that direct attention to assessing the extent to which Kentucky is providing its citizens with accessible, affordable higher education that leads to degree completion and the attendant benefits for both individuals and the state as a whole. The state identified a set of indicators to measure progress toward the goals set within each of the questions, and began publishing annual reports summarizing that progress. A specific goal has been set to double the number of Kentuckians with baccalaureate degrees from 400,000 in 2000 to 800,000 by 2020. The state's strategies to achieve that goal are focused on raising high school graduation rates, increasing college enrollment and completion among both recent high school graduates and adults, and attracting college-educated workers to the state.

After the initial reforms were begun, the state launched the "Education Pays" campaign, which included public service announcements on radio and television, as well as the dissemination of bumper stickers and posters promoting the "Education Pays" theme statewide. Changing public attitudes about education is seen as an important factor in ultimately meeting the ambitious goals.

The reforms were fundamentally about superimposing statewide planning and a state public agenda within a state that had a strong culture of regionalism and postsecondary education politics characterized by competition among college presidents for resources. This process proved especially challenging when the resource distribution advocated by the CPE to implement a statewide public agenda was at odds with traditional resource allocation patterns. One casualty of this challenge was the tenure of the first president of the CPE, Gordon Davies, whose contract was not renewed in 2002. Davies was replaced by Tom Layzell, formerly the commissioner of higher education in Mississippi, who retired in 2007 and has been succeeded by two interim presidents as the search continues for a permanent replacement.

Governor Patton was succeeded by Republican Ernie Fletcher, whose single term in office, from 2003 to 2007, encompassed several important education reform initiatives. His tenure, however, was colored by a scandal and his eventual indictment for his administration's practices regarding the state merit system. Kentucky was one of 13 states that formed a new coalition under the American Diploma Project (ADP) network to improve high schools. The state's participation in that project helped shape a number of initiatives involving the alignment of curricula and assessments across high school and college during Fletcher's term:

- In 2004, the CPE approved a statewide student placement policy for public postsecondary institutions based on the American Diploma Project’s standards of college readiness.
- The Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) convened groups of P–12 and postsecondary faculty, that, with input from business and other external stakeholders, developed competency standards in literacy and mathematics as a means to reduce remediation in college. The Board of Education approved these revised core standards in 2006.
- In 2006, the Board of Education approved an increase in high school graduation requirements, which it characterized as a college preparatory curriculum for all students. Effective for the class of 2012, students must take mathematics each year, including algebra II, and science coursework must incorporate laboratory components.
- In 2006, the General Assembly passed House Bill 197 to establish a pilot program in end-of-course testing for algebra I, algebra II, and geometry. These exams will report on student performance in relation to the commonwealth core standards.
- Also in 2006, the General Assembly passed Senate Bill 130 which required, beginning in 2006–07: diagnostic assessment of all eighth and tenth graders using the ACT Educational Progress Assessment System; and the administration of the ACT college admissions and placement examination to all students in grade eleven to assess English, reading, mathematics, and science proficiency.

Democratic Governor Steve Beshear was elected in November 2007, and has experienced challenging budget conditions as he has sought to advance education reform. His agenda faced a midyear budget cut in his first year and a three percent cut in the 2008–09 state budget. The extent to which he will be a strong advocate of education reform is as yet unknown.

EDUCATION LANDSCAPE TODAY

Much has been written about the ambitious Kentucky education reform agenda, with the assessments falling into the “glass-half-full” or “glass-half-empty” categories. Generally, however, most assessments acknowledge the progress made amid great challenges. Major accomplishments attributed to the reform efforts include: (1) improvement in 8th grade performance on some national assessments; (2) huge increases in higher education enrollments, especially in the community and technical colleges and in adult basic education; (3) a much stronger and more responsive role of the two-year sector under the new Kentucky Community and Technical College System; (4) large gains in associate

degree completion and in the number of certificates conferred; (5) a decline in the adult illiteracy rate; and (6) a major increase in the percentage of adults who have a bachelor's degree (although the percentage remains low relative to other states).

Despite these improvements, Kentucky continues to perform poorly on most indicators used to compare state higher education performance in the National Center's report card, *Measuring Up* (National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education 2008). Indicators of student preparation for college remain low relative to other states, despite some improvement. The high school graduation rate has declined over the last decade, even as a higher percentage of those graduates are enrolling in college. While one-year retention rates of college students compare well with other states, the percentage of first-time, full-time students who complete a bachelor's degree within six years is low. The production of bachelor's degrees has declined relative to the number enrolled, though this may be a result of increased enrollments in four-year institutions and an increased emphasis on the award of certificates. Overall performance on strengthening the pipeline from high school to college completion remains very problematic: about 18 out of every 100 ninth graders in the state complete high school, go directly college, and attain an associate degree within three years or a bachelor's degree within six years. The national average is about 20 (NCHEMS 2006b).

Efforts to keep college affordable, which are especially important for a low-wealth state like Kentucky, have been impeded by budget shortfalls, as is happening generally across the country. Kentucky higher education institutions are raising tuition and fees in an effort to compensate for budget cuts. Tuition increases over the past ten years have averaged eight percent per year in the state's four-year colleges and universities, and nine percent per year in the two-year sector (NCES 2008). As tuition increased at three to four times the rate of inflation, increases in family income were less than the rate of inflation. Families in Kentucky devote a comparatively large share of income after financial aid to attend public institutions, even community colleges. The state's investment in need-based aid is low compared with other states, and students in Kentucky take out larger loans than their peers in other states (National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education 2008).

One aspect of the reform agenda that has been particularly troublesome and political for years is the mechanism to assess K–12 performance and to use those assessments to determine college readiness. Triggered by concerns about flat reading scores on national assessments, the General Assembly replaced the existing assessment system with the Commonwealth Accountability Testing System (CATS) in 1999. CATS, a high-stakes test used to assess school performance, has itself been controversial, with concerns that the new system lowered academic standards. Continuing concerns about low school performance on national assessments has led to efforts to once again change the assessment regimen.

The issue has partisan dimensions, with Republicans (who control the Senate) favoring pending legislation (Senate Bill 1) to replace CATS with a system that would track individual student performance over time and be referenced to national standards. Democrats (who control the House) voted against SB 1 and generally favor assessments designed to more closely reflect performance on courses in relation to state standards rather than nationally-normed grade-level exams.² The teachers' union fears changing to any new system that could be used as a means to evaluate teachers. The legislative action in 2006 to require ACT testing and to pilot end-of-year exams has added more complexity to the assessment debate. A CPE official noted that some in the K–12 community fear that ACT scores, when they are released, will show lower rates of proficiency than CATS scores show, revealing CATS standards as too low. Jon Draud, in one of his first major actions as state commissioner of K–12 education, announced in March 2008 that he will convene a task force at the end of the 2008 General Assembly session to try to achieve consensus among the parties on the choice of assessment and accountability systems. Clearly, the state continues to search for the right combination of tools to understand and improve educational performance.

A report released by the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce (2007) provides a “glass-half-empty” perspective on the current education landscape after so much expended effort on reform. The report acknowledges the progress that has been made but cites the continued poor performance at most stages along the education pipeline. It notes that the state has made little progress with respect to the national average in increasing educational attainment and per capita income, and expresses concern about the state’s ability to produce, attract, and retain the college-educated individuals who are crucial to the development of a more competitive state economy.

The chamber report cites a number of barriers to further progress. Among them are two that are relevant to our purpose in studying the operation and impact of the P–16 Council. One is the lack of structures and leadership to provide policy coordination and combat the institutional and regional competition that characterizes the state. The report asserts that “the state policy leadership and coordinating structure established in HB 1 is not working as intended,” citing widespread agreement among those interviewed in preparing the report that “the reestablishment of the CPE as an effective entity is essential to the future of postsecondary reform.”

Seemingly in response to the concern that the CPE needs to play a stronger coordinating role, Governor Beshear issued an executive order in August 2008 reversing an action by his predecessor and moving the CPE from the education cabinet to a direct

² Subsequent to the completion of the case study research, Senate Bill 1 was enacted into law, reflecting a major compromise between parties and philosophies of assessment. It calls for a blend of national assessments and assessments based directly on Kentucky’s educational standards. Despite enactment of the compromise legislation, assessment remains a politically contentious issue and there are many questions about the implementation of this aspect of SB 1.

reporting relationship to his office. This move returns the CPE to the original structure envisioned by the 1997 reform. The executive order cites the chamber report and claims that the change will emphasize “the importance of higher education in the Commonwealth and promote greater efficiency and economy.” A political news watcher quoted the governor as saying of the interim status of the CPE leadership: “To recruit the kind of national educational leader we need as the new CPE president, he or she must be a close advisor to the governor.”

Another barrier cited is lack of alignment. The chamber’s report states that the appropriate connections among all levels of education that would ensure student success do not exist, noting in particular the misalignment of the CATS system with expectations for postsecondary-level study. As evidence of this lack of alignment, the report notes that over 50% of college freshmen need remediation in at least one subject.

The report offers a number of recommendations to the governor and General Assembly, including that the goals set forth in HB 1 be reaffirmed and that they redefine the goal “to establish a comprehensive, integrated strategy to develop a seamless (P–20) education system. . .” This recommendation raises the question of the role that the existing P–16 Council has played in this history and whether it can be an effective mechanism in furthering the ambitious goals of education reform and alignment in Kentucky.

THE BEGINNINGS OF THE P–16 COUNCIL

It may be a surprise to learn that the P–16 Council was established in 1999, given its absence from the discussion of the extensive reform agenda recounted above. But the P–16 Council is rarely, if ever, mentioned in all the materials that were reviewed to understand these ten years of reform. Those materials include published reports, news articles, and government documents. During our on-site interviews as well, we found that mention of “the council” was usually interpreted to mean the Council on Postsecondary Education (CPE) before we clarified the subject of our inquiry. But the public record notwithstanding, we learned through interviews that the P–16 Council is viewed by many as a valuable piece of the story.

The CPE initiated the P–16 Council in 1999 in collaboration with the State Board of Education. It was viewed as a means for both sectors to obtain advice from each other, and other participants, as they carried out their expanded responsibilities under the reform agendas for K–12, postsecondary, and adult education. As stated on the CPE website:

“The State P–16 Council was formed to help Kentucky achieve its ambitious goals for education reform by improving cooperation and communication among elementary, secondary, and postsecondary teachers and administrators. Kentucky trails national averages for percentages of its population that go to college, persist, and graduate. The State P–16 Council champions initiatives

that motivate Kentuckians to complete high school and postsecondary education.”

Helen Mountjoy, the governor’s cabinet secretary for education and workforce development, described the motivation for the P–16 Council’s formation in terms of trying to get people talking instead of finger pointing:

“When the people at the Council on Postsecondary Education started talking about [how] they’re not sending us qualified students, people over here responded with, ‘they’re not sending us qualified teachers.’ And off you go to the races. And conducting that kind of information exchange through the media was probably not the most effective way to actually benefit the people involved—those students at all levels. And so the notion was that reasonable people could actually sit around a table together and put some of this stuff on there without coming to blows, and that this would be a good thing for the state. Frankly, when we started I’m not sure that we looked a whole lot farther than that, than trying to eliminate some of the finger-pointing and to realize that we were all in this together.”

These discussions were intended to provide advice to the Board of Education, the CPE, and the council’s other partner agencies on the preparation and professional development of teachers, the alignment of competency standards, and the elimination of barriers impeding student transition from preschool through the baccalaureate.

Reflecting the regionalism of the state’s culture, the state P–16 Council was created to be part of a network of regional councils. According to one current member, the intent was for the statewide council to set priorities and have much of the work done at the regional level. In 2001, the General Assembly enacted legislation authorizing the CPE to encourage establishment of local P–16 councils. In the next session, the General Assembly appropriated funding to serve as seed money to support local councils. There are now 22 local councils in place. No state funding, however, has been provided to support the local councils since the original seed money was allocated.

COUNCIL STRUCTURE AND OPERATIONS

The council is a voluntary effort among state agencies; it has no basis in state statute and no line-item budget. According to the CPE website, there are 18 members representing a variety of state agencies, with the Board of Education and the CPE having the largest representation:

- Kentucky Board of Education (3 members);
- Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education (3 members);
- State Commissioner of Education;

- President of the Council on Postsecondary Education;
- Educational Professional Standards Board (2 members);
- Kentucky Department of Education Director of Early Childhood Development;
- CPE Vice President for Adult Education;
- Executive Director of Technical Education;
- Commissioner of Workforce Investment;
- Executive Director of the Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority;
- A business representative;
- A labor representative designated by the Kentucky Workforce Investment Board; and
- The Secretary of the Education Cabinet.

Notably absent from council membership are legislators—reflecting the fact that the council was created as a mechanism to increase conversation among state agencies with responsibilities in advancing the P–16 education agenda. There is no formal role for the governor and none of the three governors who have served during the council’s existence has played a key role. In fact, one member commented that he wasn’t sure that the current governor even knew the council existed. While the governor’s education cabinet secretary is a member, the council is clearly not intended to be run as an extension of the governor’s cabinet. Rather, it is a collaborative effort among state agencies with clear lead roles for the CPE and the State Board of Education.

Respondents concurred that the council, *as a council*, does not take policy positions, does not lobby for legislation, and does not engage in action to implement the matters that it considers. Instead, it depends on the constituent agencies to act, each according to its mission with respect to the P–16 agenda. Diane Bazell, assistant vice president for academic affairs at CPE, explained that rather than set its own policies or take collective policy positions, the council is a vehicle for getting departments and agencies to revise their policies. Cabinet Secretary Mountjoy agreed:

“It is not so much a matter of trying to formulate legislation as it is trying to maximize the ability of the two levels to work together effectively and to do things that are of mutual benefit for the students of Kentucky. It was not perceived as something that was going to set a legislative agenda.”

Elaine Ferris, the new deputy commissioner of education, provided her view on the council’s lack of authority, having recently joined it. “You put the idea out there and if the other agencies buy into it . . . well they’ll take it and . . . create some kind of statute or regulation. . . .” Jeanne Ferguson, member of the Board of Education and current council chair, said the council does not “spearhead” P–16 agenda but “works with”

agencies on it. Phillip Rogers, executive director of the Education Professional Standards Board, agreed that the council is a mechanism for bringing agencies together but not for telling them what to do. When asked about how the council dealt with a controversial issue on assessment and whether it came to a vote, he said there was no vote because it was clear to council members whose call it was and that “the department is going to do what the department is going to do.”

The council meets quarterly for a full day. The chair of the council alternates annually between the Department of Education and the CPE, as does the staffing of the council. In practice, the CPE plays a large role regardless of who is the official chair and staff. Said Bazell, “I’ve been a key driver for sure, but no one person or organization can do it alone.” Some respondents did note a bit of imbalance between the two sectors, citing a stronger role played by the CPE, but others said that participation and leadership by the CPE and the Department of Education is “mostly equal.” One member noted that “were it not for the CPE, we wouldn’t have the council we have today. They’re the catalyst that’s made it work.” Both the Department of Education and the CPE carry information about the council on their respective websites. The information from the Department of Education includes links to meeting materials (minutes and agendas) from 2004 to 2007, while the CPE covers meetings from 2001 to 2007.

CPE’s Bazell said it was a conscious decision not to have staff assigned specifically to the council so as not to “ghettoize” anyone with a P–16 title. That would create a new silo, which was not the intent of the council, she said. Partly for the same reason, the council has no general fund budget or direct authority.

Another reason for the lack of funding is the assumption that the local P–16 councils would perform much of the “real work” of P–16 reform. Perhaps as a result of the strong political culture of regionalism in Kentucky, the state-local council model seems to reflect the belief that policy change does not occur with “top-down” edicts from the state. Said one respondent:

“It took me 15 years on the state board to really appreciate the fact that because you change policy at the state level does not mean you change practice at the local level. If we really want to change practice at the local level, I think there need to be more local initiatives.”

Councilmember Philip Rogers of the Educational Professional Standards Board offered an example of the importance of local implementation. He stressed that if Kentucky is to shape its teacher and principal training programs to be truly collaborative and “highly clinical” so as to improve student learning and college readiness, “it’s going to take regional groups to make that happen.”

There are differences of opinion on the desired relationship between the state and local councils, as well as on the balance between the need for “top-down” and “bottom-up” initiatives. However, it is clear that the local councils were always intended to play a

key role. Most interviewees explained that the state council sets priorities for the local councils to work on—perhaps developing pilot programs that can be tested before major statewide policy changes are made. But some respondents cited some difficulty with this model. Jon Draud, state commissioner of education, noted that the local councils have tended to be driven by local agendas rather than coalescing around a few issues of statewide concern. Bazell said that the state council cannot impose requirements without providing funding for local councils, which most people hope will be forthcoming.

Several respondents noted the huge variation in capacity and output across the 22 local councils, with only one—in northern Kentucky—regularly cited as having much capacity to act. Although the state body intends to request state funding to support the local councils, most feel that the capacity of local councils will depend on their ability to raise outside funding—something that the Northern Kentucky Council has done successfully.

The statewide P–16 Council is one of a long list of committees that the CPE staffs and works with, according to the CPE website. Some of those committees have jurisdiction over topics central to P–16 alignment, including committees on college access, developmental education, transfer, STEM, faculty development, adult learners, and quality and accountability. This structure signals the breadth of the role of the CPE, consistent with the 1997 reform vision. It also indicates that as well as not having the authority to develop or implement policy, the P–16 Council in Kentucky competes with many other advisory bodies for the attention of the state bureaucracy.

COUNCIL PRIORITIES

The website for the Council on Postsecondary Education has a “frequently asked questions” section about the P–16 council. In response to the question “What objectives is the council pursuing,” the website lists three priorities:

- Aligning the curricula and requirements between high schools and colleges to make clear what every student needs to know and be able to do at each educational level;
- Raising the quality of teachers through improved preparation and professional development; and
- Increasing the number and diversity of students attending college by stressing programs that persuade parents and students to plan early for advanced education.

Our interviews with council members confirmed the top two priorities, although we heard much more about efforts to agree upon and align assessments than about aligning curricula. The overriding priority we heard in our interviews was reducing the need for

remedial instruction in postsecondary education, which the council is attempting to address through the three priority areas above.

Another priority we heard regards the development of a P–20 database that would enable the tracking of individual student progress across education sectors and over time. On the data front, the council is also working with member agencies to develop a set of indicators of progress in meeting the state’s goals, from early childhood through college and the workplace.

Improving the transfer of credit—from the Community and Technical College System to universities and from high schools to postsecondary institutions—is another priority of the council. This has directed attention to issues such as dual enrollment, advanced placement, and the transferability of technical credits toward degree attainment.

Securing funding for the local councils is also a priority. This is seen as a prerequisite for achieving most of the P–16 alignment agenda. Representative Frank Rasche, chair of the Education Committee, explained that there are legislative efforts to codify and fund local councils but not the state council, because of the belief that more happens locally. As one example of local efforts, Commissioner Draud commended the steps taken in one region to smooth the transfer of credit and voiced hope that other regions would take similar actions. He did not indicate that there was any priority on developing statewide policies or guidelines around transfer of credit. As another example, Secretary Mountjoy spoke of a regional council she had served on that succeeded in getting local businesses, workforce representatives, schools, and colleges together to determine how best to fashion the region’s fourth year mathematics curriculum once the state’s high school graduation requirements are changed—and to align the curriculum with local community and technical colleges. She noted that these alignments are easier to accomplish at the local level but cannot be achieved without staff for the regional councils.

COUNCIL ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Identifying the accomplishments of the P–16 Council is difficult, because its role is advisory and because many other groups and individuals have had a major influence on P–16 reform activity in Kentucky. I will address council members’ perceptions of the value added by the council in the next section. Here I report official pronouncements of council accomplishments, along with areas where interviewees cited the council playing a key role in a particular outcome.

The website for the CPE offers the following answer to the question, “what has the council done so far?”:

- Sponsored Kentucky’s participation in the American Diploma Project to help align high school graduation standards with specified postsecondary and employment needs;

- Sponsored statewide teams of P–12 teachers and postsecondary faculty in mathematics and literacy who recommended consistent expectations for student learning to reduce the need for postsecondary remediation;
- Endorsed large-scale projects to improve mathematics and science teaching in the middle schools;
- Promoted diagnostic testing in mathematics to help high school students identify academic deficiencies that they should correct before entering college;
- Promoted funding proposals for innovative approaches to teacher education and endorsed statewide symposia of chief academic officers and deans of arts and sciences and education to improve the preparation and teaching effectiveness of P–12 teachers;
- Endorsed a large-scale statewide survey of high school age youth about their attitudes toward postsecondary education;
- Endorsed a statewide public communication campaign to promote postsecondary education for all Kentuckians;
- Coordinated involvement of the Kentucky Virtual University in projects to extend the access of education to students of all ages and to expand professional development opportunities for teachers;
- Sponsored a \$20+ million statewide GEAR UP grant to prepare economically disadvantaged middle school students for college; and
- Oversaw the formation of local P–16 councils across the commonwealth.

Interviewees concurred that joining the America Diploma Project (ADP) helped to spur many following achievements, and they credited the council with bringing ADP to Kentucky. The move to increase graduation requirements, although officially accomplished by the Board of Education, was also credited in part to the council, because it was a direct result of ADP involvement. Business became more involved in the graduation requirement issue due to the council and, through that participation, business representatives successfully made the case that students need the same level of rigor in high school whether they go on to postsecondary education or go directly into the workforce.

Some interviewees credited the council with advancing discussions about standards and with progress on assessment and action on statewide placement exams and benchmarks. Some, however, countered that the council has not played a substantial role in the ongoing assessment debates. Several people mentioned council accomplishments that can be directly attributable to the interactions across stakeholder communities that the council provides. For example, Secretary Mountjoy said the council helped expand communication with the business community and private universities concerning

admissions and other issues. Councilmember Rogers said the Educational Professional Standards Board strengthened its relationship with the CPE because of the council and helped improve educational leadership programs. Another respondent cited as an accomplishment the council's efforts to engage the public around its efforts to increase standards and expectations around college-going.

The council was also credited with getting student identifiers added to high school transcripts, giving colleges a means to track and report back to schools on the performance of their students. One member saw this as an example of how having an item repeatedly appear on the council agenda can eventually lead to action.

Some respondents also identified accomplishments of the local councils. As noted, the Northern Kentucky Council was regularly mentioned as the most effective local council. With the help of money from Toyota, that council has made some inroads into its goal of improving mathematics instruction in K–12 schools. Other local councils have reportedly made progress in getting the business sector to help identify the kinds of skills that need to be emphasized in high school to ensure that students are ready for the workplace. Progress at the local level is seen as highly contingent upon the ability to attract outside funding—leading Dave Adkisson, a statewide councilmember and president of the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce, to characterize the local P–16 councils as a “patchwork” situation with “spotty” results.

VALUE ADDED BY THE P–16 COUNCIL

An important purpose of this study of P–16 and P–20 councils is to understand if and how the council mechanism adds value to the work that would occur whether or not the council existed. This is a key question because these councils are typically superimposed on existing agency structures and do not themselves hold the power to legislate or even to implement legislative or executive directives. The value of the Kentucky P–16 Council, and similar councils of which we are aware, comes from its ability to influence the work of existing agencies and organizations. In this case, that includes its ability to influence the network of 22 local P–16 councils.

There is a significant difference between the Kentucky council and many others, including those in Rhode Island and Arizona, which were also subjects of our study. The Kentucky council has no specified mandate to provide recommendations to the governor. Rather, it is merely a structure for agencies to advise one another. As such, its ability to influence agency agendas is likely more constrained because it cannot depend on the power and influence of the governor to endorse or act upon its recommendations. Instead, its value stems on the willingness of agencies—primarily the CPE and the Department of Education—to take action. The glass-half-empty perception of this model is reflected in the Chamber of Commerce's report (2007), which said, “The perception of some is that

the P–16 Council has served more as a debating and discussion forum than as an effective means to address critical, cross-agency issues.”

Our interviews, however, revealed much support for the glass-half-full view that such “debating and discussion” is indeed valuable for two related reasons: it enhances communication across agencies and, by so doing, it influences each agency’s agenda. Interviewees also found value in the council’s influence over the local P–16 councils.

The Council Enhances Communication

Councilmember Phillip Rogers explained how lack of authority does not preclude the value of communication:

“They don’t have any authority, but when you have the commissioner and the president of the Council on Postsecondary Education, you have the secretary of education sitting there, you have the developmental-ed folks there . . . you have the vocational-ed folks there, you’ve got the workforce development folks sitting at the table . . . if you just walked in a room and put those folks at a table and locked the door and walked out . . . something’s going to happen. . .”

Cabinet Secretary Mountjoy strongly echoed this view, commenting that “if you’re going to break down the silo you have to know what’s happening inside the other silo.” She added that this kind of cross-agency learning would not have happened without the council. Bazell, of the CPE, shared her view that the council is “the invisible magnet pulling these forces together” and that, without it, people would not be talking to one another. Commissioner Draud confirmed that people wouldn’t be communicating with each other without the council. Several others described the council as a place to share information. This is confirmed by a review of the meeting minutes which document a wide variety of informational reports made to the council over its nine-year history.

Even Chamber of Commerce President Adkisson, who favors more authority for the CPE and the council, sees the communication fostered by the council as a “good first step.” And somewhat surprisingly, since the Legislature lacks a formal place at the table, Representative Winters acknowledged the value of communication: “I think the greatest role at the P–16 Council is to bring all the stakeholders to the table and discuss the major issues.”

Through Communication, the Council Influences Agency Agendas

Bazell described the council as a vehicle for getting partner agencies to revise their policies. A prime example of this is the increase in graduation requirements. Other examples include the addition of the student ID on transcripts, mentioned above, and efforts by the Educational Professional Standards Board to reshape their masters and principal training programs to better prepare professionals to implement the P–16 reform

agenda. Said Rogers of these efforts to change policies and practices, “I am a small agency so I benefit from using the council as leverage.”

Representative Winters provided an example of how the council affected legislation that will, in turn, affect the agency agendas. He credited the council’s persistent attention to STEM issues with helping him get legislation adopted that would establish a STEM Initiative Task Force, administratively housed in the CPE, to develop a statewide strategic and business plan to include goals and measurable benchmarks for improving education and outcomes in STEM fields. He agreed that by having many stakeholders present at meetings, the council can bring pressure on agencies to take actions they otherwise may not take.

An interesting contrast in perspective was provided by two members with respect to the overall agenda facing the partner agencies in the council: integrating the three major reforms of the 1990s (in K–12, postsecondary, and adult education). Bazell said that those reforms were never intended to be part of a whole, integrated agenda and credited the council with bringing them together so that each partner agency would implement reform in a more comprehensive manner. Adkisson of the Chamber of Commerce had a different view, saying that while each reform is good, the council had not yet succeeded in bringing them together into coordinated P–16 reform.

The Council Influences Local Approaches to P–16 Alignment

As noted previously, there is a strong view among many stakeholders that much of the real work of P–16 alignment necessarily occurs at the local level. Respondents lauded the benefits of communication across parties at the local level, just as they did for the state arena. Mountjoy, who had previously served on a local council, offered that without a local council structure there would not be any emphasis on people interacting effectively across organizational boundaries. As an example she cited that people responsible for curricula in the different counties within one region did not know each other well until the council structure brought them together. These interactions made a significant difference in the sharing of professional development opportunities and in their dealing with issues of college admissions. Even more valuable, she said, was the “real communication with the business community” which is missing at the state council level. For example, business leaders in one region arranged for faculty to go on field trips to local businesses to better identify what business is looking for in graduates and to agree on what business might offer in mentorships and internships for students.

While many respondents found value in local council activity, there is less agreement on the extent to which the state council has been able to integrate local activities or align local council priorities with state priorities. Adkisson, and the Chamber of Commerce as reflected in its 2007 report, find statewide coordination lacking. But Mountjoy gave examples of how the state council affected the agenda of the local council on which she served—directing its attention to issues, such as dual credit, that would

likely not have gotten much attention had it not been raised at the state level. Charles McGrew, director for information and research, cited another form of coordination between state and local councils. He said that the local councils are the most important users of the data that are generated by the CPE and shared with the state council.

BARRIERS TO GREATER SUCCESS

Perhaps it is not surprising, given the enormity of the reform task facing the P-16 Council, that respondents had more to say about barriers and shortcomings to council achievements than they did about accomplishments and value added by the council. At the same time, the Kentucky council was one of the first in the nation and one might expect a more sanguine assessment of its accomplishments by now. Certainly it was puzzling to hear K-12 Commissioner Draud say that the state council is “just now really starting to get their teeth into these issues,” even though he added “I might be wrong about that.”

There were four major explanations offered for the lack of sufficient progress made by the state P-16 Council.

Lack of Authority

Even among those members who found much to commend in the value of communicating across agencies, there was recognition that the council is hamstrung by its lack of authority. Said one member, trying “to put feet on these recommendations” is tough, since the council can only make suggestions. Representative Rasche cited as the “biggest weakness” the lack of accountability to anyone since there is no mandate and no direct involvement by the governor. If the council were charged to make recommendations to the governor, as is the case with other state councils, the lack of statutory authority would not be as problematic. Rasche added that the governor’s involvement could help move the council from studying issues to accomplishing things.

Adkisson described the council as “stuck without a mandate in the middle of K-12 and higher education,” lacking the ability to make things happen. Another member was more specific about the authority needed. He said he would like to see the General Assembly require the council to bring forward reports to the Legislature as a united front. As it is, the Legislature hears only from each agency separately. When asked what is preventing the council from doing that, he implied that they have no reason or legitimacy now to do so, since the Legislature does not invite, or expect, the council to report out as a council. Lack of statutory authority also means lack of an identified budget. Many members feel strongly that, at the very least, a budget is needed to support local councils.

Insufficient Participation

The lack of formal participation by the Legislature is seen as a barrier, as is lack of involvement by the governor. Some members believe that having the governor's cabinet secretary is sufficient participation from the governor. However, the recent order by Governor Beshear to restore the CPE to an independent status reporting directly to the governor might be cause to reconsider whether the cabinet secretary can effectively represent the governor. The role played by the CPE is itself an issue raised by some members, with some feeling that the agenda is driven too much by the CPE. In addition to calls for a greater voice by K-12 to balance that of the CPE, there are also calls for more seats on the council for business and labor so that the council can hear directly from these groups. The Chamber of Commerce would like to see a stronger role for the Cabinet for Economic Development.

Lack of Effective Leadership

A number of responses pointed to the need for more effective leadership, even if not stated precisely in those terms. Observing that the council is not likely to, nor should, get much legal authority, one member said the council just needs to be more effective. Another suggested that this might be done by narrowing the vision and becoming more focused on specific goals. Yet another member suggested that one of these goals should be to seek greater public support for the work of the council.

Representative Winters pointed more directly to leadership issues in saying that when he attends the meetings he does not “sense the kind of urgency that ought to be existing there, and I think that all relates to the leadership.” And Adkisson expressed one of the main themes of the Chamber of Commerce report, which found that the leadership exercised by the CPE had been unable to prevent university presidents from pursuing their own objectives. He cited leadership as the biggest lever for moving forward—and lack of leadership as the biggest obstacle.

Lack of State-Regional Coordination Concerning Policy

It is fair to say that Kentucky is still seeking the right balance between the state and local P-16 councils. All agree that local action is needed to implement change and that local councils seem to be an effective mechanism for that, if they have resources. But there seems to be a lack of agreement on how the state-local relationship should work. Some want the state council to set priorities for the locals so that all parts of the state are working on the same issues. Others see the locals as raising issues to bubble up to the state. No one seems sure how policy change is to occur either way. Past experience has convinced some that state policy edicts don't translate to local policy implementation. But with local councils largely setting their own agendas, it is unclear how local priorities might, collectively, result in consensus for state policy change.

A good example of the quandary is found in the dual enrollment issue. Dual enrollment has been identified as a strategy for increasing college readiness and college-going but there are no statewide eligibility criteria for dual enrollment. Local councils and institutions develop their own criteria, posing a severe challenge to any statewide effort to make concurrent enrollment an effective part of the state's alignment strategy. The council has not been in a position to craft statewide policy from disparate local policies and practices. Lack of authority and funding at the state level prevent the council from taking even small steps toward statewide policy development such as requiring local councils to submit reports. Bazell summed up the issue by agreeing that the state-local dynamic is "not where we want it to be."

Inability to Apply Policy Levers

In addition to these structural and organizational barriers, respondents mentioned three specific areas where the council has failed, thus far, to accomplish some tasks viewed as necessary to achieving P-16 alignment. Interestingly, these address three of the four policy levers that the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, in its policy report, *Claiming Common Ground*, advised states to use to achieve P-16 alignment (Callan et al. 2006).

1. Unresolved Issues with Assessment

Despite considerable work and policy initiatives over the last decade, Kentucky is still struggling to align assessments across high school and college. While the state is not alone in this struggle, several respondents mentioned the continued lack of alignment between CATS and college readiness standards as a failed endeavor. Lack of alignment between the adult and postsecondary sectors, with the GED not signaling college readiness, is another major problem, particularly in light of the priority placed on addressing the need for adult education in the state. Debates over CATS, ACT, and end-of-course exams continue, debates which, according to the Chamber of Commerce report, "are sending mixed signals to schools and students and are seriously undermining the efforts of schools to improve the preparation of students for postsecondary education."

2. Lack of a Data System

Despite the council's success in adding a student identifier to high school transcripts, the council has not made much progress in developing a longitudinal student data system, which is needed to track and improve outcomes in line with state goals.

3. Lack of Financial Incentives for Collaboration

As noted earlier, the council and the CPE continue to struggle within a statewide culture in which postsecondary institutions compete for resources and students. Without authority over resources, the council has no mechanism to provide financial incentives to

spur collaboration among institutions. Similarly, lack of funding for core staff at the regional councils rules out the state council's use of fiscal incentives to bring faculty together or otherwise promote collaboration.

SUSTAINABILITY

As with the half-full and half-empty perspectives identified above, there is good news and bad news on the issue of sustainability. The good news is that the viability of the state P-16 Council is not linked to any particular politician or office, as is the case in other states. This council has already spanned three gubernatorial administrations—across political parties from Democrat to Republican and back to Democrat. As a voluntary effort largely between the Council on Postsecondary Education and the state Department of Education, the P-16 Council has survived several changes in the top leadership of those agencies. Additionally, the council in Kentucky does not face hostility from legislators (as is the case in Rhode Island, for example), even though the Legislature is not part of the council's formal structure. Legislative leaders attend the meetings, even though they are not members.

The bad news is that the lack of ownership by the governor or other elected officials of either party could mean that while the council survives, it does so with limited impact. In fact, it may be that the council has survived because it has stayed on the sidelines of some of the battles over contentious issues like CATS. As one member noted, the council was able “to fly under the radar screen” due to its lack of statutory authority and visibility.

Observers are looking for more than survival, however, and many have considered structural changes. Representative Rasche thinks it might be time to give the council some legislative authority and a budget—and hold it accountable for results. He believes that the governor needs to become more involved. Bazell agrees that statutory authority is needed because of continual turnover of key individuals, but is not certain how much specificity such a statute should have.

A few models were described by interviewees, but there is no real movement afoot to go forth with any of them. Under one model the council would become a “super policy entity” with the ability to have a role in state policymaking independent of its constituent agencies. This model was termed a “train wreck” by one member, likening it to “tearing down the house to build a fence.” A second model would be to formalize its role as supporting local council initiatives and providing a forum for ideas without granting the state council a formal role in state policymaking. This model would hardly seem to provide leadership over the three-part reform agenda. A third option would be to stop short of creating a super agency but have the Legislature authorize or require the council to bring forward collective reports and recommendations.

The Kentucky Chamber of Commerce has probably put the most thought into new models, since the chamber is convinced that the current model is not capable of imposing statewide order on the centrifugal forces of regionalism and institutional competition. Chamber President Adkisson said that the chamber, instead of recommending that the council have new mandates, is calling on the governor and leaders of the General Assembly to form a high-level policy group—with legislative and executive branch representation—to consider what structures might best allow the state to move more rapidly in achieving P–16 alignment. Adkisson believes that Governor Beshear will address the chamber’s recommendation soon.

OBSERVATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The lesson from Kentucky’s nine years of experience with the statewide P–16 Council may well be that there is a trade-off between longevity and influence. The council has been in existence nearly ten years but appears to play more of a peripheral role than the other state councils we studied. Mention of the council is notably absent in most of the research and news reports about the implementation of Kentucky’s policy reforms. And, surprisingly, at the time of our visit, several interviewees commented that they knew little about the council because they had only recently joined or had attended only a few meetings. When turnover does change council membership, one would expect high-level officials to know something substantive about the council even before serving on it. Yet one prominent new member had “no idea” about the council’s priorities in advance of that member’s first meeting. Another prominent member described the state council as “just now getting active.” It is hard to escape the conclusion that the council has not been a huge factor in the great strides Kentucky has made in its reform agenda.

Kentucky has indeed been a national model for education reformers. The state seems to have all of the substantive components of a reform agenda in place but has not found the mechanism to best carry it out. It has made excellent use of national policy experts and has responded to their advice, as much as any state has, to try to guide the priorities of individual institutions around a statewide agenda for educational attainment and economic development. The “five questions” accountability system is the best example of setting an education agenda around statewide needs. Each of the three major reforms was an attempt to improve statewide outcomes with respect to the five questions. But the collective activities of the Council on Postsecondary Education (CPE), the Department of Education, their partner agencies on the statewide P–16 Council, and the regional councils have not brought the pieces together as well and as quickly as many would have hoped or expected.

The CPE is viewed by at least the business stakeholders represented by the Chamber of Commerce as ineffective. The Strategic Committee on Postsecondary Education (SCOPE) that was set up to advise the CPE has cancelled its last several

meetings and its status is unclear. The local councils have the legitimacy but not the resources to take action. Even with resources, however, the local councils could not, through their independent actions, create state policies to further state goals. And the statewide council is searching for ways to have more influence over policy agendas and over local councils. The conclusion of the Chamber of Commerce report that “the next step is to establish a comprehensive, integrated P–20 framework for reform” should raise serious questions about the adequacy of current structures.

Use of Policy Levers to Close the Divide

A central purpose of this project is to determine whether the P–16 and P–20 council mechanism is, or can be, an effective means of bridging the divide between K–12 and postsecondary education governance structures. This divide was described in the National Center’s report *The Governance Divide* (Venezia et al. 2005). In its follow-up report, *Claiming Common Ground*, the National Center recommended that states use four policy levers to close the divide and achieve better results: alignment of curricula and assessments; fiscal incentives; linked data systems; and accountability that reaches across sectors (Callan et al. 2006).

All of these levers have received attention in Kentucky—perhaps because the state has sought and used the advice of the National Center and other policy experts who promote their use. But these are *policy* levers and the P–16 Council is not itself playing a major role in policy development. The council has had an impact on curriculum alignment, through its sponsorship of statewide teams of school and college faculty to develop common expectations in mathematics and language arts, and its endorsement of those teams’ recommendations. It has played a smaller role on the more contentious issue of aligning assessments, on which the reform efforts have largely stalled pending the outcome of the K–12 commissioner’s new task force.

Responsibility for using finance policy to align budgets with strategic state goals was delegated primarily to the CPE rather than to the council. According to the Chamber of Commerce report, the CPE has not been able to resist traditional institution-based approaches to resource allocation. State budget shortfalls have thwarted Governor Patton’s original intent to establish performance incentives through the use of various trust funds. In addition, the P–16 Council is making little progress on developing a common data system. The council has encountered many issues regarding agency turf which it is not designed to mediate or resolve.

Kentucky’s accountability system provides an excellent opportunity for the state’s leaders to monitor its progress in educational performance across the P–16 divide. More than most states, the system can track statewide, not just institutional, outcomes. In addition, the system includes measures of readiness *for college* and contributions to the economy *after college*, as well as traditional measures of performance *in college*. The accountability system, however, is an initiative of the CPE, rather than the P–16 Council,

raising the question of whether this component of reform and alignment can be implemented effectively.

With no immediate threats to the P-16 Council's existence, and with a strong foundation on which to build an aligned system of education, the "glass-half-full" perspective suggests that, spurred by the Chamber of Commerce recommendation to go back to the drawing board on P-16 or P-20 structures, the state's leaders may devise an approach that builds on the strengths of the existing P-16 Council and gives it the influence to effect real policy change.

Chapter Six
Rhode Island’s PK–16 Council

Nancy B. Shulock

In his inaugural address, Governor Carcieri vowed to restore the balance of power between the executive and legislative branches of government by pursuing amendments to the state constitution. Voters overwhelmingly approved these changes that were championed by Governor Carcieri. Today, the republican principle that the legislative branch enacts the laws and the executive branch administers them has been restored to Rhode Island government.

—Governor Donald Carcieri’s website

The smallest state in the union is no lightweight when it comes to political conflict. Deep partisan divisions and a constitutional power struggle between the executive and legislative branches have profoundly shaped the early years of the Governor’s PK–16 Council of Rhode Island. This political landscape provides the backdrop for this case study examining the governor’s attempt to reshape Rhode Island’s education system and economy through the PK–16 Council mechanism. This chapter begins by providing a summary of the political and policy contexts within which the council exists. Following that, I describe the structure and operation of the council, and recount its accomplishments and shortcomings, as assessed by council participants. In my concluding comments, I assess the capacity of Rhode Island’s council mechanism to close the divide between K–12 and higher education, which plagues much of American education today.¹

¹ The research for this case study was conducted by a team of five individuals, under the leadership of the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education. The team interviewed eleven individuals in a site visit conducted March 17–18, 2008, and some telephone interviews. Interviewees included the governor, staff to the governor, the commissioners of K–12 and higher education, the board chairman for the K–12 Regents, an elected representative and legislative staff person, a labor and workforce agency official, a business representative, and members and staff of the P–16 Council. The case study author, a member of the team, supplemented interview data with an extensive review of available reports and documents. The information reflects a snapshot in time. All information and activities are presented as of the time of the research.

STATE POLITICAL CONTEXT

Governor Donald Carcieri was elected to the first of his two terms in 2002. A Republican, he focused his campaign on the need to rein in state spending, balance the budget, demand integrity in government, and create a coordinated plan for statewide economic redevelopment. A math teacher in his early career, he brought with him as governor a strong school reform agenda that included support for increased investment in both K–12 and higher education. He was elected to his first term with no previous experience in statewide politics, having served as chief executive officer of a large international materials science company. Described by one of our interviewees as “a very aggressive ideologue” favoring smaller government and English-only policies, he brought his education reform agenda into a state with a long history of Democratic dominance in the Legislature and strong teachers unions. Six years into his tenure, relationships between political parties and branches of government are poor—described by one respondent as “open warfare” between the governor and legislative leadership.

At the beginning of his first term, the partisan divide between a Republican governor and a Democratic Legislature was just one piece of a contentious political environment. A long-simmering power struggle between the legislative and executive branches of state government came to a head in 2004 when voters passed a Separation of Powers constitutional amendment to prohibit legislators from sitting on, or making appointments to, boards or commissions with executive powers. Governor Carcieri campaigned actively in support of the measure, which was supported by 78% of voters.

Prior to the passage of the Separation of Powers amendment, the Legislature played a strong role in education policy and had appointments on the Board of Regents for K–12 education and the Board of Governors for Higher Education. According to the outgoing state commissioner of K–12 education, Peter McWalters, who has served in the post since 1992, “most of what I was doing between 1997 and 2002 was legislatively driven.” By contrast, McWalters described the current Legislature as “passive” with respect to education policy in the face of an “aggressive education governor.” The hands-off approach of the Legislature is in large part due to the Separation of Powers amendment, which removed them from boards, but also can be traced to a change of leadership in the House and Senate that occurred the year that Governor Carcieri was elected. The recent death of one of the legislative leaders in education policy further weakened the role of the Legislature in education policy. McWalters summarized the current situation as follows:

“We are looking for voices in the Legislature that would care about the education agenda. Since anyone who touches it would have to collaborate with the governor or take him on . . . you get the feeling that they are waiting each other out.”

Reelected to his second and final term in 2006, the governor will leave office in January 2011. By then he is almost certain to be credited with ushering in major education reforms—covering K–12 and postsecondary education. The primary issue addressed in this case study is the role played by the PK–16 Council in the pursuit of this reform agenda.

STATE POLICY CONTEXT FOR P–16 EDUCATION REFORM

The governor’s education reform agenda is aimed ultimately at increasing the economic competitiveness of the state through better educated citizens. The challenges in Rhode Island mirror those in other parts of the country: increasing numbers of immigrant students with English language needs, strapped state budgets, increasing tuition, and the increased educational demands of a changing economy.

In Rhode Island, the Hispanic population has grown from less than 5% of the state population in 1990 to more than 11% in 2007. The percentage of the state population made up by Hispanics is higher among school-age (17%) and college-age (13%) youth than among adults, which is contributing to increasing numbers of first-generation and underprepared college students. The Hispanic share of the population is much larger in urban than rural areas; Hispanics account for more than 40% of the population under age 18 in Providence. Educating underserved populations that are expanding faster than other groups will be critical to the state’s future. In addition, the manufacturing sector has fallen from 20% of the economy in 1990 to less than 12% today, with the growing industries requiring workers with higher levels of education.

Funding constraints in Rhode Island present major challenges to increasing educational attainment. As a Republican, Governor Carcieri came into office as an unusual proponent of greater investment in education. He proposed significant increases in K–12 funding, called for reversing the long trend of declining state investment in public colleges, and proposed increases in need-based student aid. Funding for higher education has declined, with the flagship public university now receiving less than 20% of its operating budget from the state.

State fiscal problems, however, have impeded efforts to increase the investment in education. Rhode Island was the only state to show a decline in higher education appropriations in 2007–08. Additional cuts imposed for 2008–09 will result in larger classes, the first lay-offs of faculty and staff at the University of Rhode Island (URI) in 15 years, and elimination of several sports programs. As a result of the cuts, tuition is expected to rise significantly at the three public institutions in the state.

These recent cuts to higher education come in the midst of the worst financial crisis in Rhode Island since the state bailed out failing banks nearly 20 years ago. Despite a substantial Democratic majority in the Legislature, the 2008–09 budget also includes cuts to health and welfare programs, and reductions in the state government workforce

combined with reduced benefits for remaining workers. Tax increases were not seen as an option given substantial increases in unemployment.

Rhode Island's performance on the higher education indicators in the 50-state report card, *Measuring Up*, is mixed; the state performs well for its traditional population, but does poorly for the segments of its population that are growing (National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education 2008). Rhode Island is an underperformer in preparing students for college, with its 8th graders earning poor scores on national assessments in science, math, and writing, and its low-income students performing particularly poorly on math assessments. College affordability is another area where the state performs poorly. Families in Rhode Island devote a comparatively large share of income (after financial aid) to attend public institutions, even community colleges. The state's investment in need-based aid is low compared with other states, and students take out larger loans to pay high tuition and other costs.

Despite poor preparation and high costs, Rhode Island students are comparatively likely to enroll in college. Once enrolled, persistence and completion rates compare well with the states earning the highest marks on those indicators, although the share of first-time, full-time students completing a bachelor's degree within six years has been declining in recent years. Relative to the size of its population, Rhode Island still awards more bachelor's and associate degrees than the U.S. average.

The substantial private higher education system in Rhode Island contributes to the state's relative success in awarding degrees, while masking a growing problem with educating native residents, who are more likely than nonnative residents to join the state's workforce. In addition to the state's two public universities and one public community college, there are 10 private four-year universities and one private two-year institution. The division of total postsecondary enrollment across the public and private sectors is nearly equal, with slightly more than half of enrollment in the private institutions. The private institutions account for more than two-thirds of the associate's and bachelor's degrees awarded. As is the case throughout the region, there is considerable movement across state lines to attend college. More students enter Rhode Island than leave the state to attend college, but the state is a net exporter of residents with bachelor's degrees.

The three public institutions are managed by the Rhode Island Board of Governors for Higher Education, which is currently reviewing its strategic plan and assessing progress toward the goal it set seven years ago to improve Rhode Island's educational attainment to that of leading states by 2015. The board recognizes that one challenge to meeting this goal is the need to produce jobs in the economy to encourage college graduates to remain in the state. Another major challenge concerns improving student preparation for college and reducing the need for remediation in postsecondary institutions. In seeking to develop a stronger pipeline from high school to college and into the workforce, the state has been engaged in a variety of reform efforts centered in the K–12 system.

K–12 education in Rhode Island is governed by the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education, a nine-member panel appointed by the governor and subject to confirmation by the state Senate. The commissioner of education, who is appointed by the board, manages the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE). Commissioner McWalters has recently announced that he will step down in 2009. In 1997, Rhode Island began taking a number of steps that launched the state and its governor into a national leadership role in the P–16 movement. The following timeline provides a context for a discussion of the beginnings of the Governor’s PK–16 Council:

- In 1997, the state General Assembly passed a landmark education reform act (Article 31) to help implement the state’s Comprehensive Education Strategy, an action plan to restructure the state’s public schools to increase performance.
- The Board of Regents, in concert with RIDE and state-level partners, convened two high school summits (in 2000 and 2002) for a broad array of stakeholders to consider the current state of affairs and future directions for the state’s high schools. The summits documented “substantial underachievement” in high schools, as measured by the state’s standards, and wide disparities across schools.
- The Board of Regents held two years of public hearings on summit findings, culminating in adoption of new high school graduation requirements in January 2003 to apply to students entering ninth grade in fall 2004. The requirements, which called for “graduation by proficiency,” sought to align high school graduation standards with skills essential for future success in college and the workplace. High schools were required to adopt graduation requirements that “include a demonstration of proficiency that involves multiple measures” such as portfolios, certificates of initial mastery, and senior projects (RIDE 2006).
- Governor Carcieri assumed office in January 2003, the same month that the new graduation requirements were adopted.
- In December 2003, Rhode Island received a grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to help fund the design of new performance assessments that would support the “graduation by proficiency” requirements.
- In February 2005, Governor Carcieri committed Rhode Island to join Achieve’s American Diploma Project Network, a coalition of states committed to aligning high school standards, assessments, curriculum, and accountability with the demands of postsecondary education and the workplace.

- In April 2005, Governor Carcieri issued an executive order creating the PK–16 Council (see appendix to this chapter).
- In June 2005, the Board of Regents adopted the *Rhode Island High School Diploma System*—to provide greater specificity to the Board of Regents’ High School Regulations of 2003 regarding proficiency standards and the means for assessing proficiency.
- In July 2005, Rhode Island received a competitive grant under the High School Honor States Initiative of the National Governors Association’s Center for Best Practices. The grant was to help the state implement some of its key education reforms.
- In October 2005, Rhode Island, in cooperation with New Hampshire and Vermont, adopted the assessments of the New England Common Assessments Program (NECAP) to satisfy a portion of the “graduation by proficiency” requirement. Limited at first to 10% of a student’s overall proficiency score, the value of these standardized tests has been increased to one-third of overall proficiency, with other measures now representing two-thirds.

THE BEGINNINGS OF THE PK–16 COUNCIL

Governor Carcieri issued an executive order creating the PK–16 Council early in his third year in office (see appendix), but the seeds of the council were planted earlier from inside the state’s educational bureaucracies. The chair of the Board of Governors for Higher Education ran the governor’s education transition team and recommended a P–16 structure. The recommendation grew out of the strong relationship between Commissioner McWalters of K–12 education and Jack Warner, who has served as the higher education commissioner since 2002. McWalters and Warner were long-standing members of each other’s boards, and the boards worked together to create a Joint Board for PK–16 Subcommittee. The joint board created task forces in English language arts and mathematics that developed grade level standards, which in turn became the basis of efforts to align curricula and assessments across the two systems in order to improve college readiness.

The recommendation for a P–16 structure found a ready audience in Governor Carcieri. As a former math teacher, with a wife and other family members in the teaching profession, the governor had witnessed first-hand the lack of communication across the K–12 and postsecondary sectors. Once in office, he saw the tendencies toward poor communication and cooperation mirrored in the state bureaucracy. In his words from our interview:

“What I found was that they’re not talking to one another for starters. . . . you need everybody around the table. You need people that are the ones

responsible for managing those pieces around the table. So, I took the decision to create this council.”

The executive order identifies the reasons for the creation of the council, in its “whereas” statements that make the following points:

- The future quality of life in the state will depend on the ability of the education system to produce a workforce with the skills and knowledge required to support information-age businesses.
- A high school diploma is a prerequisite for college admission and most jobs, but there is no guarantee that students who earn a diploma are prepared for college or work.
- At the Community College of Rhode Island, 58% of incoming students need two or more remedial courses.
- A coherent state system of education is best carried out by formalized and systemic communication and alignment among elementary, secondary, postsecondary, and workforce development programs.
- The Board of Governors and Board of Regents have already formed a joint board to begin to address common issues.

COUNCIL STRUCTURE AND OPERATIONS

The executive order creating the PK–16 Council specified that it be chaired by the governor. As he told us:

“I chair it, which was a conscious decision too, because obviously I want to drive the agenda, and I want to be in the center of the discussion.”

The governor had already signaled his willingness to lead education reform committees. He was at that time chairing a Blue Ribbon Panel on Mathematics and Science Education composed of education and business leaders. That panel had been formed to address the poor showing, regionally, of Rhode Island students on mathematics and science test scores.

The new PK–16 Council was created with no formal powers. It was set up as an advisory committee to recommend policies to the “appropriate board or agency.” We were told that the governor had considered creating a “super agency” with authority over existing agencies, but he met with resistance and chose the advisory model.

The membership of the council, also specified in the executive order, reflects the politics of the state as well as the governor’s governing philosophy. Initial membership was limited to individuals over whom the governor had administrative control, making it more of a management tool than a stakeholder group. There were nine members specified in the executive order:

- Governor;
- Chair of the Board of Governors for Higher Education;
- Chair of the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education;
- Commissioner of Higher Education;
- Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education;
- Director of the Department of Labor and Training;
- Executive Director of the Rhode Island Economic Development Corporation;
- Chair of the Rhode Island Economic Policy Council; and
- Chair of the Governor’s Workforce Board.

Saul Kaplan, executive director of the Rhode Island Economic Development Corporation and a council member, explained that the governor decided to limit the council to those over whom he had direct authority in order to assure that when decisions were made, there would be action taken in response. “It is a very focused group and has all of the key representation on it.”

But another member, Robert Flanders, chair of the Board of Regents, noted that the council membership is “missing the 100 pound gorilla”—in reference to the lack of legislative representation. According to Flanders, the governor said he wanted to be cautious in light of the recently passed Separation of Powers amendment to the state constitution prohibiting legislative service on those state boards and commissions that have executive powers. But as the council lacks executive power apart from its constituent units, it is unlikely that the Separation of Powers provision would prevent legislative appointments. It seems more likely, in light of the governor’s wish to use the council as a kind of mini-cabinet, that he did not believe it was appropriate or useful to include legislators on the council.

Since the council’s creation, other stakeholders have asked to be included among the members. Only one member has been added: a representative of the independent postsecondary sector in 2007. This member is the only one not part of the executive branch and over whom the governor does not exercise direct authority. So far, the governor has resisted requests from other groups, such as local school district superintendents.

The diversity of opinions about the appropriateness of the membership reflects different views of the function of the council. Those who support the council as a vehicle to improve communication among executive players believe the right members are on board. Those who believe the council should function as more of a broad-based advisory group would like to see other groups represented, such as the Legislature and organized labor. An intermediate position, currently under discussion, would be to find ways to engage other stakeholder groups in the conversations without appointing them as

members. At least for the time being, the governor has chosen to accept the price of less buy-in by stakeholder groups in exchange for more direct control over the council.

The council is not highly structured, and this is consistent with its status as primarily a team of state government leaders. It meets quarterly for several hours in the afternoon, drawing a crowd of 40 to 50 observers, most of whom are staff to the participating units. There is no public testimony taken at the meetings. There is no staff other than the governor's education policy advisor, who counts staffing the council among her many other duties. While the council has created two subcommittees (on dual enrollment and workforce readiness), there is no formal subcommittee structure as there is in Arizona.

According to one respondent, the agendas for the meeting have evolved to become somewhat more formal—having been at the beginning primarily a forum for the governor to discuss what he chose to bring to the group. According to Saul Kaplan, the meetings feel like “a directed conversation with a pretty clear agenda.” Minutes and agendas from the meeting are not published online, and there is no separate webpage for the PK–16 Council.

Since the council was not given any policymaking or implementing duties of its own, it functions primarily as a mechanism to refer issues and tasks to the appropriate constituent body for action. As Higher Education Commissioner Jack Warner explains, the council was not designed to have authority or power but to give the governor “a bully pulpit to coordinate the work of these various agencies, . . . a chance for him to weave all of these things together under one umbrella. . . It is a device that coordinates, communicates, and commands.” According to the governor:

“There's someone around that table that's responsible for a piece of whatever this agenda is that we're moving forward, so, for me, it is a managerial technique to get everybody together.”

There is no budget for the council other than that for the governor's education policy advisor and the funds available to the constituent agencies. According to several respondents, the lack of a specified budget is not a problem unless the council were to develop a priority that one of the units would not otherwise be responsible for. In view of the structure and function of the council, however, it appears that most educational priorities are represented at the table. As an example, one priority of the council has been dual enrollment, for which substantial funds were directed out of the budget of the Office of Higher Education.

Likely because the council has its roots in the joint board established by the two education commissioners, the most active participants in the council's conversations are the governor and the two commissioners. Several people commented on how intimately engaged the governor is in the work of the council. Said one: “He has lived up to his intention to be ‘intrusive’—which, in his mind is a good word.” In our interview with the

governor, it was clear to us that he has as detailed an understanding of issues such as curriculum, assessment, alignment, and teacher preparation as anyone would expect of a chair of such a council. A number of respondents complained of scant participation to date by the Labor and Training Agency representative, but a new director had just come on board and several people said they hoped for increased involvement from that sector. The members with strong ties to the business community have been, according to respondents, mostly involved in issues relating to math and science.

As described by one member, the governor looks first for consensus among the group and then looks to the appropriate unit to take the follow-up action. No one was able to recall any major issues that had not reached consensus. The governor's education policy advisor is responsible to follow up with the various units who have been assigned work as a result of the council's discussions and decisions.

COUNCIL PRIORITIES

The overriding purpose of the PK–16 Council, according to the executive order that established it, is to help the state produce an educated workforce to support the information-based economy. The functions outlined in the document indicate that the principal role of the council in pursuing this purpose is to align the expectations and outcomes of high schools, colleges, and the workforce. The executive order, signed in April 2005, specifies that the council recommend policies that:

- “Align standards for achievement in reading, writing, and mathematics so that students graduating from Rhode Island high schools are fully prepared for college-level work;
- Link achievement standards with employer expectations;
- Establish formal high school credit-based transition programs with higher education institutions;
- Improve the quality of teachers and educational administrators who lead schools, districts, and school-related initiatives;
- Support the recommendations of the Governor's Blue Ribbon Panel on Math-Science Achievement and track our State's progress; and
- Create a unified data system to connect information between our elementary and secondary education system, postsecondary institutions and workforce development programs.”

The council's priorities have since been updated based on its accomplishments, which are described in more detail in the following section. For example, now that the council believes it has completed its alignment priority in English language arts, mathematics, and science, the council's priority for alignment (see the first bullet above)

has shifted to implementing the multiple assessments of graduation proficiency and using those assessments in college admissions and placement decisions. In this arena, the council is considering the relative weights of the assessment components and the procedures for implementing the individualized assessments, such as portfolios.

Dual enrollment (see the third bullet above) has also become a major priority of the council. The council's goal in this area is to move from a very decentralized system of partnerships between individual schools and colleges to a more standardized set of policies that draws upon common design principles. The addition of the independent sector to the council has enhanced attention to this priority, as the many independent colleges have focused on building their own partnerships with high schools.

Addressing the performance gaps in urban high schools is an additional council priority beyond those identified in the executive order—and it was cited by the governor. He has created an urban intervention task force that is separate from the council but that reports its recommendations to the council.

Mathematics, science, and STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) issues generally make up another priority area for the council. The Governor's Blue Ribbon Panel on Mathematics and Science Education released an action plan with strategies in four areas: governance and culture, teacher recruitment, teacher quality, and learning opportunities for students. The panel developed specific strategies and performance measures for evaluating and tracking progress in each area. Strategies include: (1) developing and funding a system of financial incentives, including scholarships, education loan forgiveness programs, hiring bonuses, and pay scale differentials for pre- and in- service STEM educators; and (2) developing a communications strategy and campaign to broaden public support for the importance of STEM subjects.

COUNCIL ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Identifying the accomplishments of the PK–16 Council is clouded by the difficulty of distinguishing between the work of the council and that of the agencies and boards that the council comprises. I will address this “value added” issue in the next section. Here I report the major accomplishments to which the council contributed, according to our interviewees.

Although begun by the joint task force of the two education boards before the PK–16 Council was created, the alignment of college readiness standards between high school and postsecondary education is viewed as a significant accomplishment of the council. Commissioner Warner explained that workgroups of high school and college faculty in English language arts, mathematics, and science developed some common understandings on college readiness standards and presented them to the council. The

council referred the proposed standards to the Board of Regents and the Board of Governors, both of which adopted them.

The alignment efforts are part of a larger set of actions carried out under the state's involvement in Achieve's American Diploma Project (ADP). According to Achieve's website, Governor Carcieri committed Rhode Island to join ADP two months before he issued his executive order creating the PK–16 Council. Even with that prior commitment, the decision to join and how to proceed with the ADP alignment agenda has been a topic of considerable discussion in the council, which perhaps explains why the decision to join ADP was widely cited as a council accomplishment. Rhode Island's ADP Action Team is composed of members of the PK–16 Council. In addition, the state's ADP plan of "action steps" adopted in February 2006 set much of the agenda for the council's work. The ADP plan includes the following four main objectives, plus specific steps to be taken in each area over the subsequent two years:

- Align high school standards and assessments with the knowledge and skills required for success after high school;
- Require all high school graduates to take challenging courses that actually prepare them for life after high school;
- Streamline the assessment system so that the tests students take in high school can also serve as readiness tests for college and work; and
- Hold high schools accountable for graduating students who are ready for college or careers, and hold postsecondary institutions accountable for students' success once enrolled.

Implementation of the new diploma system was also cited as a council accomplishment, although the relationship between the multiple assessments of high school proficiency and determinations of college readiness is a work in progress. Another accomplishment mentioned by interviewees was transitioning the focus of dual enrollment from high achievers to low-income students. This work was facilitated by receipt of a National Governors Association (NGA) grant. The council was credited with the decision to apply for that grant.

With the addition to the council of a representative from the independent higher education sector, the council has also expanded the state's understanding of the range of partnerships that exist between high schools and postsecondary institutions. With funding from the Rhode Island Foundation, the Rhode Island Commodores, the Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, and the National Governors Association, a comprehensive survey of partnerships was undertaken and a preliminary report was presented to the council in March 2008, with a final report delivered in June 2008. The final report called for the development of statewide principles for effective partnerships and standardized means to evaluate them.

The council is also credited with helping to increase the quality of teaching and learning in math and science in the public schools. It adopted and assumed responsibility for implementing the recommendations of the Governor’s Blue Ribbon Panel on Math and Science Education. A specific achievement cited in this area is the “Physics First” initiative, funded in part by a National Governors Association grant, to restructure and add rigor to the high school science curriculum by teaching physics in 9th grade.

Two data-related accomplishments were also cited. One pertains to the high school feedback report, for which the council helped to forge agreement among stakeholders about the kinds of student-performance information that should be provided from colleges back to high schools. The other concerns a larger data sharing issue. While there has not been significant progress in building a unified data system, there has been some improvement in sharing data across units.

VALUE ADDED BY THE PK–16 COUNCIL

An important purpose of this study of P–16 and P–20 councils is to understand if and how the council mechanism adds value to the work that would occur whether or not the council existed. This is a key question because these councils are typically superimposed on existing agency structures and do not themselves hold the power to legislate or even to implement legislative or executive directives. The primary value of the Rhode Island PK–16 Council, and similar councils of which we are aware, derives from its ability to influence the work of existing agencies and organizations. With the Rhode Island council limited primarily to the state’s executive branch leadership, its ultimate value depends on its ability to leverage the effectiveness of the constituent systems and agencies, since that’s where authority for action is invested. As K–12 Board of Regents Chair Flanders said about the council, “it is more discussion than action,” but he added that “as long as you can reach consensus there with the leadership about what things need to be done and they go out and do them, . . . I think these councils can be effective and useful notwithstanding that they don’t necessarily have any power.”

Limited Influence on Policy Agendas

From the respondents who participate on the council, we heard a strong consensus that the council is valuable—but not for *what* gets attended to so much as *how* education issues are handled. We heard two explanations for the council’s limited influence (in terms of value added) on the nature of the education policy agenda. First, as McWalters explained, the council’s constituent systems and agencies were already focused on the appropriate education reform issues. In his case as K–12 Commissioner, the agenda for schools had been clearly shaped by the requirements of the federal No Child Left Behind Act. To meet those requirements, the state Department of Education attended to the development of grade-level expectations for proficiency and collaborated with Vermont

and New Hampshire in the development of the New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP). In the case of the postsecondary agenda, the strong working relationships that preceded the council's creation ensured that transition issues were already on the agenda.

The second reason for the council's limited influence on the agenda is its total disconnection from the Legislature. Any new initiatives requiring legislation would simply be "dead on arrival," according to one respondent. McWalters noted that his board, all appointees of the current governor, recognizes that if they want something to move through the legislative process they have to find a way to keep the governor's stamp off of it. Flanders echoed this sentiment, noting that while the council can be effective without formal powers, a problem arises if the council needs legislative action since there is no legislative buy-in on the council.

Value of Collaboration

Respondents were very positive, however, about the council's value in influencing how each participating unit performs its work. Several noted that, contrary to what one might expect in a state so small geographically, collaboration is simply not part of Rhode Island's history and culture. As the governor said, it "always amazes me for a little state, all the people doing these things out there—doing their own thing and not coordinating and not talking." The council has brought an unprecedented level of collaboration that its members find valuable in several ways, including the following.

Seeing the Bigger Picture

Meeting regularly as a collaborative team allows each member to see the issues from a broader perspective. Sandra Powell, director of the Department of Labor and Training, gave the example of dual enrollment. Addressing the issue in the larger forum allowed people to see the big picture and determine the best statewide approaches. For example, she said the council helped her understand how dual enrollment, implemented effectively, can be a good strategy for ensuring that young adults who fail to make the transition into college do not enter the workforce unprepared. Powell added that the Governor's Workforce Board has become more policy oriented as a result of their participation on the council, whereas prior to that the board had focused on distributing grant monies. The governor's education advisor, Janet Hidalgo, praised Powell for the extent to which she has connected education reform issues to the workforce development agenda. More generally, Hidalgo claimed that the council has been successful in getting members to gain deeper understandings of policy issues, claiming that "we absolutely have people who would not be making these connections" were it not for the council.

Highlighting Issues and Setting Priorities

By providing a forum in which participants gain a wider perspective, the council helps its members set priorities within their existing agendas. This can be an important achievement since, as McWalters emphasized, most of what the council is doing “was already being done or was in the works.” He added, however, that the council is useful as a forum to “raise the profile” of certain issues. This happened for dual enrollment and other partnerships between high schools and colleges—helping to move attention beyond local partnerships to the establishment of state policy. This occurred as well for the issue of assessment alignment, where heightened attention has been given to the role of NECAP (standardized assessments for K–12 schools) with respect to admission and placement in higher education. A third issue that was highlighted by the council—with data reviewed at meetings—was the especially poor performance in urban high schools.

Doing a Better Job in One’s Own Unit

Several respondents stated that council participants can be more effective in their own work because they learn how it fits with what other systems and agencies are doing. Respondents had numerous examples of how the broader perspective has influenced the actions of individual units. Hidalgo cited implementation of the new diploma system, noting that the decision to include K–12 assessment results on high school transcripts would probably not have occurred if the council were not engaged in aligning standards and assessments across the K–16 pipeline. Similarly, Warner said that interagency collaboration aimed at developing a referral and placement system to link training programs with local workforce needs “probably would not have taken place if you did not have a forum for bringing people to that table in the first place.”

Warner offered a second example of the value of collaboration. The Rhode Island Assistance Authority, which coordinates student financial aid programs, was developing a web portal, and found that portions of the portal were duplicating a similar one managed by the Department of Labor and Training. That led to a better integration of the portals and some cross-referencing, thereby eliminating some duplication and enhancing the value of each one.

Other examples offered included:

- The Department of Labor and Training, upon reviewing the alarmingly low math scores on NECAP, increased their math-related services to their program participants. As one example, the department increased the extent to which youth focus on math during the summer as part of the Youth Workforce Development Program. The department also worked with local workforce investment boards to address ways to integrate mathematics into youth workforce programs.

- Input from workforce participants on the council is influencing the implementation of the proficiency aspects of the graduation requirements related to the demonstration of applied learning skills.
- Input from business representatives on the council convinced the Department of Education to place a higher priority on math and science issues than they otherwise would have.

The general consensus was that the council helps to break down silos and that this helps individual agencies and systems do a better job.

More Efficient Management

A different kind of added value is probably appreciated most by Governor Carcieri. He designed the council to be principally a management device to bring together people who are under his administrative control. As he said in our interview, “For me, it’s a huge tool—it’s the major tool, so that rather than go to four or five different conversations, and have to repeat the same agenda or discuss the same issue, and do it six different times, this body is a way to vet all of that.”

Accountability

Two council members credited the council with helping increase accountability. One noted that the council creates a public record and the expectation that things get done. Another member said that the governor and his education advisor hold the participating units accountable for following up on decisions made by the council. This is a different kind of accountability than in K–16 councils such as Arizona’s, which have broad-based membership from outside of government, invite public input at meetings, and post council meeting agendas and minutes on a government website. The Rhode Island PK–16 Council facilitates accountability within the chain of bureaucratic command, but not broader public accountability.

BARRIERS TO GREATER SUCCESS

The governor has made his education reform priorities so clear that there is no ambiguity about what “success” would mean for the council. It would mean increasing the capacity of Rhode Island’s schools and colleges to produce a workforce with the skills and knowledge to support an information-age economy. While many respondents were quite positive about the value of the council in helping work toward that goal, there are barriers to its success. One set of barriers cited relates to the difficulty of the goal itself. But I begin with the “elephant-in-the-room” barrier.

Lack of Legislative Buy-in

It is impossible to over-state the ways in which political tensions between the governor and the Legislature limit the effectiveness of the council. The governor, viewing the council as a management tool, believes that the process and the participants are appropriate and that the challenge lies in finding the best strategies and interventions to promote reform. This view is completely at odds with the view from inside the Legislature. Joseph McNamara, chair of the House Committee on Health, Education, and Welfare, believes that the council should have members from the Legislature, unions, business, and industry—the latter apart from state officials who work in the business arena. He questions the effectiveness of a council that is not accountable to the Legislature, asking “where’s the beef?” in a council without commitments to goals, outcomes, timelines, and overall accountability to produce results.

He criticized the governor for not making an effort to reach out to the Legislature about his education objectives, joking that “unless he has the wrong phone number for me” the governor has not invited McNamara to be involved in the council. McNamara said he would be satisfied with some involvement and input by legislators, even if it did not include voting membership.

According to some, however, the lack of legislative participation is a consequence of the establishment of the council as part of the governor’s administrative body. Paula Dominguez, senior education policy analyst in the House of Representatives, acknowledges the lack of higher education champions in the Legislature. She believes that the governor’s strong leadership over the council has contributed to the partisan rift over education policy and discouraged legislators from engaging in the issues themselves.

Flanders, the chair of the K–12 Board of Regents, believes that the legislative frustration stems from their unmet expectation that the council would produce a set of policy recommendations with a legislative agenda. Given others’ comments, however, that proposals with the governor’s stamp would be “dead on arrival,” it is doubtful that this would be an effective council strategy.

One respondent noted that outside funders have declined to support council initiatives because they see the standoff with the Legislature and conclude that there would be no chance for policy reforms—which reveals a considerable disadvantage of the sour relationships. This respondent lamented that “it is more and more clear that the table is significantly hampered by not having legislative representation.” The respondent also said that the governor has not asked the legislative leadership to give support because he is “absolutely at war” with the leadership..

Governor Carcieri created the council with full knowledge of the politics—both legislative politics and union politics, which are closely related because of strong union alliances with the Democratic Legislature. He said he was warned not to use the executive order mechanism because the resulting council would be viewed, particularly by the teachers unions, as being critical of teachers and the schools. But he felt strongly,

he said, that he “just wanted to get some things done for young people” and has tried to do so in spite of the political barriers. He acknowledged that it has been hard but said he is still holding out hope:

“At the end of the day, my message to the unions is ‘Look, this a win-win’—the worst thing you’re going to be doing is fighting this kind of a thing, because people want to see the youngsters do well.”

A Tough Task

Other barriers to success cited by respondents included the difficulty of the task at hand. Turning around low school performance, especially in urban areas with high numbers of English-language learners and special education students, is never easy. The governor cited problems in the urban schools as the chief reason he would not declare the council to have been a complete success. Kaplan described the change being sought as a “transformation” that will require more sustained participation from the business community and more political will than has been evident to date.

While the challenge of transforming Rhode Island’s education system amid budget constraints and rapid demographic shifts is indeed difficult, it seems impossible to separate this task from the political stand-off with the Legislature. Without the prospects of initiating policy change, it appears to be unlikely that significant change, let alone transformation, will occur. As an example, one member expressed frustration with the council’s progress on dual enrollment, explaining that while there has been a report, there have been no statewide solutions or standardization of policies governing partnerships. Such actions would require policy change, which would require confronting the impasse with the Legislature.

As an example of another barrier to success, a council member noted that issues tend to fall back into the silos of the separate agencies after being considered by the council. This is, in his view, because the council does not take the next step and propose policies to change current practice. For this member too, policy reform seems to be off the table.

The fact that the council’s membership is small and limited to insiders may be one reason why follow-through on the council’s priorities appears to be obstructed. An example can be found in the council’s inability to implement the portfolio provisions of the proficiency-based graduation system. Doing so, according to McWalters, would require a bigger presence and commitment from the business community to evaluate student portfolios, “but we have not been able to come up with the actual infrastructure” and how it would be supported over time.

SUSTAINABILITY

Wherever a P-16 council is closely identified with a governor, the question of sustainability beyond the incumbent's administration is a prime concern. In the case of Rhode Island's PK-16 Council, there are several threats to sustainability beyond January 2011 when Governor Carcieri leaves office. The consensus of participants and observers is that the council cannot be sustained in its current form, which, one member suggested, may have become "too political to survive." Not only is the council the creation of the governor, who chairs it and aggressively oversees its work, but its reform agenda is the governor's—and it is an agenda that is not popular with many Democrats and with the teachers unions. Moreover, the governor created the council to conform to his own management philosophy. So even if the next governor were to share Carcieri's passion for education reform, he or she may not want a council composed almost entirely of governor's lieutenants.

Legislative participation and buy-in, even if this does not include voting membership, is seen as critical to sustainability. Although the executive order establishing the council will remain in place unless rescinded by a new governor, most respondents believe that statutory authorization and resources, in the form of a line-item budget, would be necessary to secure its continued operation. But with no education reform champions in the Legislature and with entrenched hostilities between political parties and branches of government, it seems unlikely that the Legislature would authorize the creation of such an entity with any real powers and control over resources.

Some respondents also said that if the council is to be sustained, it would need to have much more involvement from external stakeholders. This would likely require abandoning the management model in favor of a broad-based advisory group with expanded membership. Business community involvement is seen as critical, but is limited now to the three government officials whose agencies focus on workforce development. Local school and college officials are another set of stakeholders whose buy-in might be needed to ensure the council has momentum to continue.

Some interviewees said they expect the governor to address the issue of the council's future before he departs. One member concluded that if the governor does not resolve the issue, then the council's continuation in a new administration would have to be the result of "an accident of personality." The two commissioners noted that since the council was established based on the foundation of their strong working connections, the council's efforts would continue if those connections remained. Since our interviews, however, Commissioner McWalters has announced his retirement early next year—further handicapping sustainability.

The governor seems uncertain as to whether there is a good strategy to guarantee that the council outlasts his term. He acknowledged that others have suggested a statutory approach but he noted that one cannot, through statute, force a governor to feel passionate

about something. He said he was more inclined to leave the current mechanism in place for the new governor to use “if the governor feels as strongly as I do about it.”

OBSERVATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The most obvious lesson to draw from the experience of the state’s PK–16 Council is that politics can thwart efforts that require collaboration among stakeholders in addressing the P–16 reform agenda. The lack of buy-in to the council’s agenda and to its legitimacy in shaping the policy process is preventing the council from achieving the transformation in educational practices and outcomes that its supporters were hoping to see.

A second lesson is that *policy* is an essential tool in effecting a reform agenda. In the absence of legislative support, the Rhode Island council is limited to making changes at the margin *within the bounds of current public policies*. The council has not come forward with a policy agenda to implement its intended reforms, and, apparently, if it did, the proposal would go nowhere in the legislative process.

The governor’s decision to use a management model for the council, absent membership from the Legislature and from other stakeholder groups, has likely stoked the flames of political conflict. But that decision was itself a consequence of the political landscape that prevailed when he assumed office. That landscape probably created limits at the outset to what the council could hope to accomplish. On the positive side, there seems to be ample evidence that the council has made the government entities more effective in their work—even without the prospects to push through major policy reforms. Within the management team, the appropriate individuals are involved and, although this has been somewhat slow in coming, the connections between education representatives and those representing the labor and workforce sector seem to be growing. Collaboration among these entities within the council framework has influenced the respective agendas of the agencies.

While it is understandable that the governor chose not to invite legislative participation, it is somewhat puzzling why there is not broader participation on the council from the business community, the local education community, and organized labor groups that represent sectors of the economy that seek a better-trained workforce. A council with broad support from these groups might have been able to exert influence on the Legislature to engage the council’s agenda. Short of that, broader representation on the council would have helped with one of its key priorities, which is to implement the proficiency-based graduation system. This reform has stalled because of lack of sufficient contribution from the business community to evaluate student portfolios and projects. Faced with requests from numerous stakeholders to participate, the governor is reportedly considering expanding the membership. If that happens, the council might have a greater chance of outlasting the end of his term.

A third lesson from this case is that formal authority for a state P–16 council is probably less important than the capacity of a council to pursue a policy agenda. States across the country are grappling with this question about the appropriate extent of authority for P–16 councils. These councils are established as mechanisms for bridging K–12 and postsecondary education systems that have separate histories, governance structures, policies, and finance mechanisms. Creating a “super agency” with formal authority over existing K–12 and postsecondary governing boards seems problematic, for it threatens the needed cooperation from those boards and creates an additional layer of bureaucracy. On the other hand, councils that lack authority can be easily dismissed as forums for discussion rather than action.

In the case of Rhode Island, that “discussion” has brought demonstrable benefits. The leaders of each constituent system or agency believe they are doing a better job than they would if there were no council to broaden their perspectives. But the council is limited, not so much by its lack of “super agency” powers as by its lack of ability to generate and promote a policy agenda *of the council*.

Use of Policy Levers to Close the Divide

A central purpose of this project is to determine whether the P–16 and P–20 council mechanism is, or can be, an effective means of bridging the divide between K–12 and postsecondary education, which was described in *The Governance Divide*, a report from the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education (Venezia et al. 2005). In its follow-up report, *Claiming Common Ground*, the National Center recommended that states use four policy levers to close the divide and achieve better results: alignment of curricula and assessments; fiscal incentives; linked data systems; and accountability that reaches across sectors (Callan et al. 2006).

Rhode Island has been a leader in aligning curricula across sectors and has laid the groundwork for alignment of assessments, using its innovative proficiency-based approach. Due to the council’s inability to push a policy agenda, however, the council has not been able to make effective use of the other policy levers—or even to fully institutionalize its alignment agenda. For example, dual enrollment is envisioned as a key strategy to move low-income students across aligned curricula, but the council has been unable to implement statewide policies on dual enrollment, having spent considerable effort learning about the range of local practices. Improvements in the state’s data system have been limited to some enhanced data sharing, with no progress made in building a statewide student tracking system, which would probably require legislation. Despite the governor’s strong support for accountability, there has been no progress in developing a statewide accountability system that would span K–12 and postsecondary education. And perhaps most indicative of the barriers faced by the council in using policy levers to build a seamless education system, the Legislature is devising new funding formulas containing

incentives for collaboration across sectors, but that effort is disconnected from the work of the council.

The Rhode Island PK–16 Council has embraced an important P–16 reform agenda. In doing so, the council has benefited from the passionate engagement of Governor Carcieri and a history of strong leadership and cooperation between the K–12 and higher education commissioners. As the governor told us at the end of our interview, “I love this topic. I could talk about it for hours.” But at the end of the day, it may be that no amount of passion and involvement by a governor can compensate for lack of legislative participation and buy-in. The Separation of Powers amendment may have restored, as the governor’s website describes, “the republican principle that the legislative branch enacts the laws and the executive branch administers them.” The irony, however, is that the governor who strongly supported that amendment finds himself in the position of being unable to *enact* the laws that he would be eager to administer.

EXECUTIVE ORDER 05-08: STATEWIDE PK-16 COUNCIL

April 25, 2005

WHEREAS, the future quality of life in the state will be based on the quality of our education system and its ability to produce a workforce with the skills and knowledge required to support information-age businesses;

WHEREAS, it is widely recognized that the high school diploma is a prerequisite for college admission and most jobs, but students who earn a diploma have no guarantee that they are prepared for college-level work or entry-level employment;

WHEREAS, a recent study conducted by the Rhode Island Office of Higher Education confirms that 58 percent of recent Rhode Island high school graduates who enrolled at the Community College of Rhode Island were required to take two or more remedial courses;

WHEREAS, a seamless, coherent state system of education is carried out best by a formal structure that ensures improved student achievement at all levels through more formalized and systemic communication and alignment between Rhode Island's elementary, secondary and post secondary ("PK-16") education systems and workforce development programs; and

WHEREAS, the Rhode Island Board of Governors for Higher Education and the Rhode Island Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education have already formed the Joint Board PK-16 Subcommittee to begin to address some common issues;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, DONALD L. CARCIERI, by the authority vested in me as Governor of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, do hereby order as follows:

1. That within the educational system of the State of Rhode Island, the Statewide PK-16 Council be established, building on the current work of the Joint Board PK-16 Subcommittee;
2. That the PK-16 Council shall be chaired by the Governor and its membership shall be appointed by the Governor and include the Chair of the Board of Governors for Higher Education, the Chair of the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education, the Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education, the Commissioner of Higher Education, the Director of the Department of Labor and Training, the Executive Director of the Rhode Island Economic Development Corporation, the Chair of the Rhode Island Economic Policy Council, and the Chair of the Human Resources Investment Council; and
3. The functions of the PK-16 Council will be to recommend to the appropriate board or agency policies designed to:
 - a. Align standards for achievement in reading, writing, and mathematics so that students graduating from Rhode Island high schools are fully prepared for college-level work;
 - b. Link achievement standards with employer expectations;
 - c. Establish formal high school credit-based transition programs with higher education institutions;

- d. Improve the quality of teachers and educational administrators who lead schools, districts, and school-related initiatives;
- e. Support the recommendations of the Governor's Blue Ribbon Panel on Math-Science Achievement and track our State's progress;
- f. Create a unified data system to connect information between our elementary and secondary education system, post secondary institutions and workforce development programs;
- g. Provide better pathways to higher education for low-income residents; and
- h. Produce a more competitive workforce and promote economic development through quality education, research and workforce development.

This Executive Order shall take effect immediately upon the date hereof.

So Ordered:

Donald L. Carcieri

Date: _____

From Dialogue to Policy? A Comparison of P–16 Councils in Three States

Nancy B. Shulock

The three states profiled in the case study research provide useful contrasts in their experiences with, and approaches to, the P–16 and P–20 council mechanism. Of the three, Kentucky has the oldest council, which was formed by mutual agreement of K–12 and postsecondary education officials in 1999. Neither the governor nor the Legislature has a formal role in the council. The councils in Arizona and Rhode Island were both created by executive order of their respective governors in 2005 but reflect vastly different gubernatorial visions. Arizona’s P–20 Council has 40 members, including four members of the Legislature and extensive representation from business, government, and the community. It is highly structured into committees and subcommittees and serves as a vehicle for generating broad-based recommendations to the governor. Rhode Island’s PK–16 Council has nine members, most of whom report directly to the governor. This council functions more as an internal management tool (through which the governor coordinates his education officials) than as a means of generating external information for consideration by those education officials. While neither Kentucky nor Rhode Island includes legislators as formal council members, in Kentucky legislators are engaged in council activities whereas Rhode Island’s council proceeds without buy-in by the Legislature as a partner in educational policymaking.

Aside from their obvious geographic differences in size and location, the three states provide variation in socio-economic conditions and thus in the nature of the educational challenges addressed by their respective councils. Kentucky is a historically lower-income state trying to raise educational achievement and engineer a transformation to a postindustrial economy. With a history of low educational attainment and ambitious reform efforts to improve education, the council’s primary task has been to pull together discrete reform efforts. Arizona, one of the fastest-growing states in the country, is trying to redesign its educational systems to accommodate increasing numbers of Latino immigrants who have less experience with and success in the educational system. One of its council’s notable challenges is to increase the college-going culture in the state. Rhode Island is a traditionally high-performing state on many educational measures, but it has begun to face some of the strains of diversification that have been experienced far longer in other parts of the country.

The National Center selected these states for in-depth study because of the conviction that their councils have engaged in substantive work to bridge the governance divide between K–12 and postsecondary education that was documented in a previous report (Venezia et al. 2005). The case studies did produce useful lessons for those interested in whether and how such councils can increase college readiness and success, and thereby help stem this nation’s decline in educational attainment relative to many other nations. While this chapter offers some of these lessons, it does not present a detailed analysis of the differences among the three councils in terms of context, history, operation, and accomplishment. For that we encourage examination of the individual cases, which provide vivid accounts of each council’s experiences and collectively offer important lessons.

The three cases reveal the depth of the divide between the K–12 and postsecondary governance systems, as well as the great difficulty states face in attempting to close it. There are daunting substantive and procedural barriers to using P–16 and P–20 councils to reform policy in ways that remedy the problems of the governance divide. For example, there are serious trade-offs to be faced in decisions about structure, influence, and sustainability of such councils. Each case study, however, reports positive outcomes as well as barriers, and some conclusions that can be drawn regarding how councils might be most effective, despite the challenges they face.

SUBSTANTIVE CHALLENGES: THE TALL ORDER OF ALIGNMENT

Substantively, there is a long agenda of tasks to accomplish to improve the alignment of these two historically divided educational bureaucracies. The three councils we studied have each recognized that one—perhaps *the*—primary task is to develop standards for college readiness that are shared across the K–16 educational community and to use those standards to influence high school and college curricula to yield a logical progression of coursework that prepares high school graduates for college success. Adding to this challenge is the awareness, in all three states, that workforce readiness of high school graduates is also a pressing concern that must be addressed through attention to readiness standards. In each of the states, these alignment efforts began with actions to increase the rigor of high school graduation requirements—efforts that were consistently cited by interview participants as major accomplishments. Less successful, however, have been efforts to use those standards to align curricula *across* the divide—an accomplishment that requires far greater coordination than agreeing on requirements in one sector (that is, high school).

All three states have struggled mightily over the issue of assessments. A key component to creating a smooth transition of students across the divide is the development of a set of instruments that measures how well students have learned the material at each stage and that feeds useful information back to educators and families so

that corrective steps can be taken. The issues involving assessment, however, have become greatly politicized in all three states and seem to be confounded by a lack of full understanding of the appropriate uses of different kinds of assessments. For example, nationally normed tests like the ACT, used widely in Kentucky, are well-suited to gauge how Kentucky students perform relative to students in other states. As a result, the ACT is favored by many who fear that local tests may use lower standards and thereby may mask relative underperformance in Kentucky. In many cases, however, end-of-course exams may serve better than ACT in identifying student proficiency levels in precollegiate course sequences whose curricula have been aligned to help students reach college readiness standards. ACT may be favored by selective colleges for admissions and placement but likely does not provide information about specific proficiency levels to help community colleges know where, in precollegiate course sequences, a student should be placed.

Rhode Island faces an additional challenge with assessment in its decision to incorporate the demonstration of proficiency in graduation requirements through portfolios and other nonstandardized test approaches. This provision has not been well implemented because it requires a high level of sustained participation from external stakeholders, particularly business, to establish and evaluate workplace-readiness proficiency.

Arizona has faced a problem common across the country with respect to the use of standards-based assessments—that is, how much and how quickly should the results of such tests have consequences for students in terms of promotion and graduation? Fierce political battles have been waged there, as elsewhere, between those who believe that students will be unfairly punished because they have not had sufficient opportunity to reach such standards, and those who believe that delaying the use of such assessments will harm students by diverting attention from the need to improve educational outcomes.

Achieving greater alignment between K–12 and postsecondary education requires a high degree of cooperation between the sectors, which would be difficult to achieve under any circumstances. To be successful in this area, states, under the guidance of their P–16 and P–20 councils, must: (1) achieve agreement on college and workforce readiness standards, (2) adjust curricula in high schools, community colleges, and four-year sectors to reflect those standards, (3) adopt plans to ensure that teacher education and in-service trainings cover the readiness standards, and develop pedagogy to teach them effectively, and (4) adopt assessment practices that help students overcome deficiencies while still in high school and help colleges with admissions and placement decisions. The councils must pursue these alignment goals along with other priorities such as increasing teacher quality, increasing teacher supply in high-need fields, expanding dual enrollment, and increasing public awareness of the need to increase college-going and college success. In addition, councils face huge procedural challenges because they lack authority over the existing governance structures that they seek to bridge. It is not surprising, therefore, that

the councils have made more progress on specific parts of the alignment agenda—such as increasing graduation requirements, improving teacher training, and expanding data collection—than on the overall goal of aligning K–16 standards, curricula, and assessments.

PROCEDURAL CHALLENGES:

THEORIES OF CHANGE IN THE ABSENCE OF AUTHORITY

Although the three councils are quite different in historical context, structure, and operation, they are similar in their lack of authority to implement educational policy. The key procedural challenge facing the P–16 and P–20 council mechanism in general is that it is overlaid on existing governance structures over which it holds no authority. The three states we studied each took a different approach to dealing with this authority conundrum. These approaches can be characterized as theories of change for how state policy might be affected in the absence of direct policymaking authority.

In Kentucky, the council operates outside of the formal legislative and executive branches of government and has no representatives from either branch among its members. It is a voluntary association of state agencies brought together under the auspices of the Council for Postsecondary Education to inform one another's work. The council does not take policy positions or work as a body to implement policies. Its implicit theory of change has two parts. First, it is assumed that the council will produce a whole greater than the sum of its parts by providing a forum for state agencies to gain a broader perspective about statewide goals and modify their independent agendas accordingly, for the better. Second, the Kentucky model depends on a network of 22 regional councils. The absence of authority, funding, and staffing for the state-level council is not perceived as a major barrier to progress since the regional councils have been created to accomplish the local work of P–16 reform. The first part of the theory appears sound, as most observers have seen evidence that cooperation among the constituent agencies has influenced their policy priorities. The regional approach, however, does not appear to have much potential to influence policy. Few regional councils have acquired the resources to attain the capacity to accomplish much. Even more importantly, the independent actions of the regions have not produced statewide consensus on policy priorities or anything resembling a statewide policy agenda.

The Rhode Island PK–16 Council enjoys a basis in law, as it was set up by an executive order of the governor. But owing to a complex and heated struggle between the legislative and executive branches (a struggle that also reflects a partisan divide), the council has no legislative support. To make matters worse, the council suffers from legislative hostility that pronounces any would-be policy initiative of the council “dead on arrival.” The governor established the council as a management tool for his administration—in effect as an education cabinet—and it is not clear whether this was a

cause or a consequence of the struggle between the branches. The implied theory of change is that a top-down model by which the governor coordinates executive branch offices that influence the education and workforce policy agendas will improve statewide coordination and results. Since the council operates largely as a management structure, it has little formal communication *per se* with outside stakeholders. This model encounters greater barriers to policy development than the Kentucky model because, absent legislative buy-in, the governor and his lieutenants are limited to working within existing policy constraints. To the extent that the Legislature pursues policy reforms, it does so on its own track, with little regard for the council's agenda.

Of the three, the Arizona P-20 Council seems to have the most potential to influence state policy. The structure and functioning of the council is based on the idea that an expanded conversation about educational performance and needs among a broad set of stakeholders can yield policy change. Two points are critical to understanding the policy potential of this council. First, while in Kentucky and Rhode Island the driving force behind the formation of the council was (and is) the higher education bureaucracy and the governor, respectively, in Arizona it was unquestionably the business community. The business community in Arizona encouraged the development of a council model that brings many stakeholders together to influence an education bureaucracy known for its ability to resist reform. Second, this expanded stakeholder group was granted legitimacy by the governor, who issued an executive order and allocated staffing and resources from her office that far outpace the resources available to the other two councils we studied. The result is a council that has a better chance of sustaining a coordinated policy agenda and for which there is a high degree of public accountability, since there are large, open meetings, published agendas, and expectations for follow-up by participants.

STRUCTURE, INFLUENCE, AND SUSTAINABILITY: TRADE-OFFS

In all three states, questions concerning the sustainability of the council loom large, but in different ways. In Rhode Island, sustainability is threatened mostly by the council's strong identification with the governor. The council is viewed as his tool for implementing his management and policy vision. There is little chance that the hostile Legislature would act to put the council in statute; thus, the fate of the council depends on the priorities of the next governor. An incoming governor would likely need to restructure the council to incorporate more voices if it is to have a good chance of surviving and having an influence on policy.

In Kentucky, by contrast, the council's sustainability is threatened by its lack of connections to any political figure. Its sustainability is threatened as well by the perception of the council's limited impact, particularly within the business community, which widely views the council as having failed to coordinate the reform agenda. There is thus the prospect of a trade-off between influence and longevity. The Kentucky council

is notably one of the oldest in the nation, but according to some observers this longevity may have resulted from its position on the sidelines of several contested issues: it has been a forum for discussion as opposed to policy development. The Kentucky Chamber of Commerce is leading an effort to strengthen the council so that it would be more effective in the policy domain. The challenge will be to increase its effectiveness without increasing opposition to its work.

In Arizona, the council's future is likewise tied to the future of the governor, who, since the case study was performed, has been appointed to a position in the Obama Administration. However, there is a reasonable likelihood that the council will continue in some form because of the widespread involvement by business, the Legislature, representatives from local schools, and the greater community.¹

In all three states the question of the councils' sustainability arises from this conundrum: councils have no statutory authority over existing educational bureaucracies and few, if anyone, supports giving them such authority. No one has called for the creation of a "super agency" or a "super board." One person we interviewed called this prospect "a train wreck" and others noted such a model would not be workable given the role and authority of existing structures. Since there appears to be no discussion of *replacing* existing structures with a unified K–16 governance body, the pertinent question in all three states becomes: what structure and legislative basis (in or outside of government) offers the best chance for a council to survive and influence the policy agendas of existing agencies and systems that, in turn, have the power to improve college and workforce readiness and postsecondary success?

CONCLUSION: TOWARD A SUSTAINABLE COUNCIL MECHANISM TO INFLUENCE POLICY

In each of the three states studied, the P–16 and P–20 councils made valuable contributions to statewide deliberations about college readiness and success. They did so by providing a forum for various stakeholders to come together to share information and gain a greater appreciation of multiple perspectives. Each of the state councils can claim a set of accomplishments that has added value within the state compared with what might have been achieved in the council's absence. But as the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education concluded in *Claiming Common Ground*, fundamental changes in state policy will be required to transform systems of education that were designed for a bygone era (Callan et al. 2006). The three councils we studied have, for the most part, struggled to be the vehicle that can promote a statewide policy agenda.

¹ Since the completion of the case study, Governor Janice Brewer, who replaced Governor Napolitano, issued an executive order establishing a "Governor's P–20 Coordinating Council."

As these states, and others, seek to enhance the value of their P–16 and P–20 councils, the chief objective should be to give the council the capacity to develop a policy agenda and push for its implementation. Councils are, no doubt, constrained by being overlaid on existing governance structures, but there appears to be no structural reason why a council cannot be charged with developing and promoting a collective P–16 policy agenda. In none of the three cases we studied did the council take on this role. Instead, the existing state entities pursued their own, independent policy agendas—shaped, one would hope, by the broader discussions of the council but nonetheless pursued independently. Councils would be more effective if they carried a unified agenda to the Legislature and advocated collectively for its enactment. Such collective, coordinated action would seem to go far in alleviating the criticism that the lack of statutory authority limits what councils can accomplish.

Councils could also be more effective if they operated with more public accountability, which could be accomplished without formal statutory authority. The Arizona council provides the best example here. The breadth of public involvement and the openness in which that council operates provide de facto accountability in generating a public record of actions to which each agency has committed. The Kentucky case provides the counterpoint, because it is a voluntary association that is not charged with making recommendations to any public official. Given the overall governance constraints, the best approach appears to be some official charge—be it by executive order or in statute—for a council to generate a policy agenda, recommend it to the governor and/or the Legislature, and advocate collectively on its behalf.

The challenge facing states more generally is to place statewide needs, not institutional interests, at the center of the policy agenda. Again, Arizona offers a key example in this regard by involving a large, broad base of participants in the council. The business community, in particular, has been credited with keeping the economic interests of the state at the heart of the reform agenda. But doing so has required a commitment of time and resources to the council that has not been matched by the other states.

In sum, these case studies suggest that closing the governance divide is not easy—certainly not unless or until fundamentally new governance structures are devised. Short of that, the cases suggest that the P–16 and P–20 council mechanism has the potential to influence policy reform aimed at closing the divide between K–12 and postsecondary education. To realize that potential, careful thought must be given to designing a structure that grants councils the authority to develop a unified policy agenda, the responsibility to recommend and advocate for that agenda in a publicly accountable manner, and the resources to sustain a broad base of council participation in order to ensure that conversations, and resulting policy agendas, are shaped by statewide needs and priorities.

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States, Schools, and Colleges: Policies to Improve Student Readiness for College and Strengthen Coordination Between Schools and Colleges (November 2009, #09-2). The authors examine what has been tried and learned about state policy leadership in bridging the divide between K–12 schools and postsecondary education.

California Higher Education, the Master Plan, and the Erosion of College Opportunity (February 2009, #09-1). This occasional paper describes the development of the 1960 Master Plan for Higher Education and the current statewide challenges that make the plan ineffective today in preventing the erosion of college opportunity.

Measuring Up 2008: The National Report Card on Higher Education. *Measuring Up 2008* consists of a national report card for higher education (December 2008, #08-4) and 50 state report cards (#08-3). *Measuring Up 2008* finds that despite modest improvements nationally, large disparities in higher education performance persist, and the nation's global competitiveness is eroding.

Technical Guide for Measuring Up 2008: Documenting Methodology, Indicators, and Data Sources (November 2008, #08-5).

The Iron Triangle: College Presidents Talk About Costs, Access, and Quality (October 2008, #08-2). This report by Public Agenda explores how college and university presidents view higher education today. Researchers surveyed the presidents on topics including cost, access, and quality, and found a disconnect between the presidents' perspectives on higher education and that of the general public.

Partnerships for Public Purposes: Engaging Higher Education in Societal Challenges of the 21st Century (April 2008, #08-1). This report summarizes the discussion from an invitational roundtable that engaged 15 leaders in higher education. The essay finds that colleges and universities have become preoccupied with advancing their prestige instead of achieving publicly defined purposes, and calls for the restoration of a greater sense of public purpose to learning in ways that directly meet the country's educational needs for the 21st century.

Good Policy, Good Practice: Improving Outcomes and Productivity in Higher Education: A Guide for Policymakers, by Patrick M. Callan, Peter T. Ewell, Joni E. Finney, and Dennis P. Jones (November 2007, #07-4). This report describes a wide range of successful strategies that states can draw from to increase the educational attainment of their residents while holding down higher education costs. The report also identifies five policy levers that state leaders can use to achieve their overall goals for higher education and, more specifically, to implement the strategies for increasing educational attainment levels.

Investigating the Alignment of High School and Community College Assessments in California, by Richard S. Brown and David N. Niemi (May 2007, #07-3). This study, in examining the math and English expectations for high school students entering California's community colleges, reveals the degree of alignment between what students master in high school versus what is expected for college-level work.

Squeeze Play: How Parents and the Public Look at Higher Education Today, by John Immerwahr and Jean Johnson (May 2007, #07-4). This report by Public Agenda explores how the American public views higher education. Funding for the research was provided by Lumina Foundation for Education as part of its Making Opportunity Affordable initiative.

"Informed Self-Placement" at American River College: A Case Study, by Jonathan E. Felder, Joni E. Finney, and Michael W. Kirst (May 2007, #07-2). This case study of American River College in Sacramento, California, examines replacing the traditional mathematics class placement test with "informed self-placement."

California Community Colleges: Making Them Stronger and More Affordable, by William Zumeta and Deborah Frankle (March 2007, #07-1). This report examines the effectiveness of

statewide policies in assisting the California Community Colleges in meeting their mandate for affordability, and makes recommendations in light of today's public needs.

Measuring Up Internationally: Developing Skills and Knowledge for the Global Knowledge Economy, by Alan Wagner (September 2006, #06-7). In comparing the performance of the United States in higher education with that of advanced, market-economy countries across the globe, this report finds that the United States' leadership position has eroded.

Measuring Up 2006: The National Report Card on Higher Education (September 2006). *Measuring Up 2006* consists of a national report card for higher education (report #06-5) and 50 state report cards (#06-4). The *Measuring Up* series provides the public and policymakers with information to assess and improve postsecondary education in each state. For the first time, this edition offers international comparisons with states and the nation as a whole.

Technical Guide for Measuring Up 2006: Documenting Methodology, Indicators, and Data Sources (2006, #06-6).

Checks and Balances at Work: The Restructuring of Virginia's Public Higher Education System, by Lara K. Couturier (June 2006, #06-3). This case study of Virginia's 2005 Restructured Higher Education Financial and Administrative Operations Act examines the restructured relationship between the commonwealth and its public colleges and universities. The act gives more autonomy to the public colleges but checks it with new accountability targeted directly to the needs of the state.

American Higher Education: How Does It Measure Up for the 21st Century? by James B. Hunt Jr. and Thomas J. Tierney with a foreword by Garrey Carruthers (May 2006, #06-2). These essays by former Governor James B. Hunt Jr. and business leader Thomas J. Tierney lay out in succinct fashion the requirements of both our nation and our states for new and higher levels of performance from America's colleges and universities.

Claiming Common Ground: State Policymaking for Improving College Readiness and Success, by Patrick M. Callan, Joni E. Finney, Michael W. Kirst, Michael D. Usdan, and Andrea Venezia (March 2006, #06-1). To improve college readiness and success, states can develop policies that better connect their K–12 and postsecondary education systems. However, state action in each of the following policy areas is needed to create college-readiness reform: alignment of coursework and assessments; state finance; statewide data systems; and accountability.

Measuring Up on College-Level Learning, by Margaret A. Miller and Peter T. Ewell (October 2005, #05-8). In this report, the National Forum on College-Level Learning proposes a model for evaluating and comparing college-level learning on a state-by-state basis, including assessing educational capital. As well as releasing the results for five participating states, the authors also explore the implications of their findings in terms of performance gaps by race/ethnicity and educating future teachers.

The Governance Divide: A Report on a Four-State Study on Improving College Readiness and Success, by Andrea Venezia, Patrick M. Callan, Joni E. Finney, Michael W. Kirst, and Michael D. Usdan (September 2005, #05-3). This report, supported by case studies in Florida, Georgia, New York, and Oregon, identifies and examines policy options available to states that are interested in creating sustained K–16 reform.

The Governance Divide: The Case Study for Florida, by Andrea Venezia and Joni E. Finney (2006, #05-4).

The Governance Divide: The Case Study for Georgia, by Andrea Venezia, Patrick M. Callan, Michael W. Kirst, and Michael D. Usdan (2006, #05-5).

The Governance Divide: The Case Study for New York, by Andrea Venezia, Michael W. Kirst, and Michael D. Usdan (2006, #05-6).

The Governance Divide: The Case Study for Oregon, by Andrea Venezia and Michael W. Kirst (2006, #05-7).

Borrowers Who Drop Out: A Neglected Aspect of the College Student Loan Trend, by Lawrence Gladieux and Laura Perna (May 2005, #05-2). This report examines the experiences of students who borrow to finance their educations, but do not complete their postsecondary programs. Using the latest comprehensive data, this report compares borrowers who drop out with other groups of students, and provides recommendations on policies and programs that would better prepare, support, and guide students—especially low-income students—in completing their degrees.

Case Study of Utah Higher Education, by Kathy Reeves Bracco and Mario Martinez (April 2005, #05-1). This report examines state policies and performance in the areas of enrollment and affordability. Compared with other states, Utah has been able to maintain a system of higher education that is more affordable for students, while enrollments have almost doubled over the past 20 years.

Measuring Up 2004: The National Report Card on Higher Education (September 2004). *Measuring Up 2004* consists of a national report card for higher education (report #04-5) and 50 state report cards (#04-4). The *Measuring Up* series provides the public and policymakers with information to assess and improve postsecondary education in each state. For the first time, this edition provides information about each state's improvement over the past decade.

Technical Guide Documenting Methodology, Indicators, and Data Sources for Measuring Up 2004 (November 2004, #04-6).

Ensuring Access with Quality to California's Community Colleges, by Gerald C. Hayward, Dennis P. Jones, Aims C. McGuinness, Jr., and Allene Timar, with a postscript by Nancy Shulock (May 2004, #04-3). This report finds that enrollment growth pressures, fee increases, and recent budget cuts in the California Community Colleges are having significant detrimental effects on student access and program quality. The report also provides recommendations for creating improvements that build from the state policy context and from existing promising practices within the community colleges.

Public Attitudes on Higher Education: A Trend Analysis, 1993 to 2003, by John Immerwahr (February 2004, #04-2). This public opinion survey, prepared by Public Agenda for the National Center, reveals that public attitudes about the importance of higher education have remained stable during the recent economic downturn. The survey also finds that there are some growing public concerns about the costs of higher education, especially for those groups most affected, including parents of high school students, African-Americans, and Hispanics.

Responding to the Crisis in College Opportunity (January 2004, #04-1). This policy statement, developed by education policy experts at Lansdowne, Virginia, proposes short-term emergency measures and long-term priorities for governors and legislators to consider for funding higher education during the current lean budget years. *Responding to the Crisis* suggests that, in 2004, the highest priority for state higher education budgets should be to protect college access and affordability for students and families.

With Diploma in Hand: Hispanic High School Seniors Talk About Their Future, by John Immerwahr (June 2003, #03-2). This report by Public Agenda explores some of the primary obstacles that many Hispanic students face in seeking higher education—barriers that suggest opportunities for creative public policy to improve college attendance and completion rates among Hispanics.

Purposes, Policies, Performance: Higher Education and the Fulfillment of a State's Public Agenda (February 2003, #03-1). This essay is drawn from discussions of higher education leaders and policy officials at a roundtable convened in June 2002 at New Jersey City University on the relationship between public purposes, policies, and performance of American higher education.

Measuring Up 2002: The State-by-State Report Card for Higher Education (October 2002, #02-7). This report card, which updates the inaugural edition released in 2000, grades each state on its performance in five key areas of higher education. *Measuring Up 2002* also evaluates each state's progress in relation to its own results from 2000.

Technical Guide Documenting Methodology, Indicators, and Data Sources for Measuring Up 2002 (October 2002, #02-8).

State Policy and Community College-Baccalaureate Transfer, by Jane V. Wellman (July 2002, #02-6). This report recommends state policies to energize and improve higher education performance regarding transfers from community colleges to four-year institutions.

Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education: The Early Years (June 2002, #02-5). The Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) attained remarkable success in funding innovative and enduring projects during its early years. This report, prepared by FIPSE's early program officers, describes how those results were achieved.

Losing Ground: A National Status Report on the Affordability of American Higher Education (May 2002, #02-3). This national status report documents the declining affordability of higher education for American families, and highlights public policies that support affordable higher education. It provides state-by-state summaries as well as national findings.

The Affordability of Higher Education: A Review of Recent Survey Research, by John Immerwahr (May 2002, #02-4). This review of recent surveys by Public Agenda confirms that Americans feel that rising college costs threaten to make higher education inaccessible for many people.

Coping with Recession: Public Policy, Economic Downturns, and Higher Education, by Patrick M. Callan (February 2002, #02-2). This report outlines the major policy considerations that states and institutions of higher education face during economic downturns.

Competition and Collaboration in California Higher Education, by Kathy Reeves Bracco and Patrick M. Callan (January 2002, #02-1). This report argues that the structure of California’s state higher education system limits the system’s capacity for collaboration.

Measuring Up 2000: The State-by-State Report Card for Higher Education (November 2000, #00-3). This first-of-its-kind report card grades each state on its performance in higher education. The report card also provides comprehensive profiles of each state and brief states-at-a-glance comparisons.

Beneath the Surface: A Statistical Analysis of the Major Variables Associated with State Grades in Measuring Up 2000, by Alisa F. Cunningham and Jane V. Wellman (November 2001, #01-4). Using statistical analysis, this report explores the “drivers” that predict overall performance in *Measuring Up 2000*.

Supplementary Analysis for Measuring Up 2000: An Exploratory Report, by Mario Martinez (November 2001, #01-3). This supplement explores the relationships within and among the performance categories in *Measuring Up 2000*.

Some Next Steps for States: A Follow-up to Measuring Up 2000, by Dennis Jones and Karen Paulson (June 2001, #01-2). This report suggests a range of actions that states can take to bridge the gap between state performance identified in *Measuring Up 2000* and the formulation of effective policy to improve performance in higher education.

A Review of Tests Performed on the Data in Measuring Up 2000, by Peter Ewell (June 2001, #01-1). This review describes the statistical testing performed on the data in *Measuring Up 2000* by the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems.

Recent State Policy Initiatives in Education: A Supplement to Measuring Up 2000, by Aims C. McGuinness, Jr. (December 2000, #00-6). This supplement highlights education initiatives that states have adopted since 1997–1998.

Assessing Student Learning Outcomes: A Supplement to Measuring Up 2000, by Peter Ewell and Paula Ries (December 2000, #00-5). This report is a national survey of state efforts to assess student-learning outcomes in higher education.

Technical Guide Documenting Methodology, Indicators, and Data Sources for Measuring Up 2000 (November 2000, #00-4).

A State-by-State Report Card on Higher Education: Prospectus (March 2000, #00-1). This document summarizes the goals of the National Center’s report-card project.

Great Expectations: How the Public and Parents—White, African-American, and Hispanic—View Higher Education, by John Immerwahr with Tony Foleno (May 2000, #00-2). This report by Public Agenda finds that Americans overwhelmingly see higher education as essential for success. Survey results are also available for the following states:

Great Expectations: How Pennsylvanians View Higher Education (May 2000, #00-2b).

Great Expectations: How Floridians View Higher Education (August 2000, #00-2c).

Great Expectations: How Coloradans View Higher Education (August 2000, #00-2d).

Great Expectations: How Californians View Higher Education (August 2000, #00-2e).

Great Expectations: How New Yorkers View Higher Education (October 2000, #00-2f).

Great Expectations: How Illinois Residents View Higher Education (October 2000, #00-2h).

State Spending for Higher Education in the Next Decade: The Battle to Sustain Current Support, by Harold A. Hovey (July 1999, #99-3). This fiscal forecast of state and local spending patterns finds that the vast majority of states will face significant fiscal deficits over the next eight years, which will in turn lead to increased scrutiny of higher education in almost all states, and to curtailed spending for public higher education in many states.

South Dakota: Developing Policy-Driven Change in Higher Education, by Mario Martinez (June 1999, #99-2). This report describes the processes for change in higher education that government, business, and higher education leaders are creating and implementing in South Dakota.

Taking Responsibility: Leaders' Expectations of Higher Education, by John Immerwahr (January 1999, #99-1). This paper reports the views of those most involved with decision making about higher education, based on focus groups and a survey conducted by Public Agenda.

The Challenges and Opportunities Facing Higher Education: An Agenda for Policy Research, by Dennis Jones, Peter Ewell, and Aims McGuinness, Jr. (December 1998, #98-8). This report argues that due to substantial changes in the landscape of postsecondary education, new state-level policy frameworks must be developed and implemented.

Higher Education Governance: Balancing Institutional and Market Influences, by Richard C. Richardson, Jr., Kathy Reeves Bracco, Patrick M. Callan, and Joni E. Finney (November 1998, #98-7). This publication describes the structural relationships that affect institutional effectiveness in higher education, and argues that state policy should strive for a balance between institutional and market forces.

Federal Tuition Tax Credits and State Higher Education Policy: A Guide for State Policy Makers, by Kristin D. Conklin (December 1998, #98-6). This report examines the implications of the federal income tax provisions for students and their families, and makes recommendations for state higher education policy.

The Challenges Facing California Higher Education: A Memorandum to the Next Governor of California, by David W. Breneman (September 1998, #98-5). This memorandum argues that California should develop a new Master Plan for Higher Education.

Tidal Wave II Revisited: A Review of Earlier Enrollment Projections for California Higher Education, by Gerald C. Hayward, David W. Breneman, and Leobardo F. Estrada (September 1998, #98-4). This review finds that earlier forecasts of a surge in higher education enrollments were accurate.

Organizing for Learning: The View from the Governor's Office, by James B. Hunt Jr., chair of the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, and former governor of North Carolina (June 1998, #98-3). This publication is an address to the American Association for Higher Education concerning opportunity in higher education.

The Price of Admission: The Growing Importance of Higher Education, by John Immerwahr (Spring 1998, #98-2). This report is a national survey of Americans' views on higher education, conducted and reported by Public Agenda.

Concept Paper: A National Center to Address Higher Education Policy, by Patrick M. Callan (March 1998, #98-1). This concept paper describes the purposes of the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education.

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