

Stakeholder panels call for unified effort to address funding, accountability issues in higher education

Higher education leaders meeting in Olympia on Feb. 22 agreed that without a substantial and sustained investment in education, the state could risk its future as a key player in the emerging global economy.

The stakeholder panels were convened by the Higher Education Coordinating Board during its February meeting to help define the major challenges to be addressed in the 2008 Strategic Master Plan for Higher Education.

The panelists said Washington Learns, the template for Gov. Chris Gregoire's effort to dramatically improve education funding and accountability, is only the start of a much longer road to predictability and consistency in state education funding.

The focus on education proposed by the governor this year must be sustained and increased across education sectors – early learning through higher education – as the state addresses important economic and social challenges associated with the new global economy, the panelists agreed.

State's economy will ebb, flow

Denny Heck, who chaired the higher education committee of Washington Learns, warned the state's current positive financial picture can and will change as the state's business cycle continues to ebb and flow in the future.

Next Board Meeting

8:30 am – 12:30 pm

March 22, 2007

State Investment Board

Olympia, WA

Public Forum

Strategic Master Plan

Vision, Mission, Challenges, Goals

(Discussion time to be determined)

Planning is needed now to ensure the additional funding needed to improve the state's education system will be there during the next downturn, he said, noting that the governor's rainy day fund is a move in the right direction.

10-year planning cycles

Improved long-range, strategic planning and continued emphasis on accountability will be needed to ensure the increased investment in education produces the intended results, panel members agreed.

Planning cycles must begin to address needs 10 to 20 years out by developing more accurate forecasting models and by working more collaboratively to ensure much higher levels of student access and success.

A key area of concern is the state's participation rate in post-secondary education, which has been declining partly because the state's high school dropout rate has increased.

Master plan principles

Bill Grinstein, HECB chair, said the master planning process would be based on four underlying principles: transparency, engagement, participation, and a strong sense of outcomes and goals.

The new plan also must address how to better prepare students for participation in post-secondary education. The full engagement of the legislative and executive branches will be sought as the plan's major strategies are developed.

Participation rates lagging

Dr. Andrew Bodman, provost of Western Washington University, said the state faces an attainment gap, an achievement gap, and a funding gap. "Increasing the number of students who earn degrees is more challenging than it might appear," Bodman said.

"Higher education is at the end of the education pipeline. To a great extent, we are dependent on what happens elsewhere in the system," he said. Participation rates for people of color are particularly problematic. Overall, participation rates have been going down, which does not bode well for the state over the next 10 to 15 years as the state's demographics continue to shift.

"About 20 percent of the students in our current 12th grade class are from under-represented groups," Bodman said.

"However, more than 33 percent of our 1st grade students come from those same groups.

The master plan needs to respond to the very substantial public pressure to ensure that *every* student who is qualified can participate in higher education."

Flexible system needed

Charlie Earl, executive director of the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, said the state also faces the challenge of maintaining a flexible education system as demand is increasing, income levels are shifting, and the population is aging and evolving ethnically.

"The state must significantly improve its performance in participation rates, affordability, and student attainment. We have to take a proactive approach; we can't wait for students to come and find us."

Panel One: Sen. Paull Shin and Rep. Deb Wallace, chairs of the Senate and House higher education committees.

Panel Two: Terry Bergeson, Washington Learns K-12 chair; Denny Heck, Washington Learns Higher Education chair; Jone Bosworth, executive director of the Department of Early Learning; and Deb Merle, the governor's higher education policy adviser.

Panel Three: Andy Bodman, Provost, Western Washington University representing the Council of Presidents; Charlie Earl, executive director of the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges; Don Bennett, interim executive director of the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board; and Violet A. Boyer, president and CEO of the Independent Colleges of Washington.

Panels cite key issues

Key issues facing the state's post-secondary system raised in the panel discussions on Feb. 22 can be found in the meeting summary at:

<http://www.hecb.wa.gov/boardmtgs>

New HECB deputy director named; starts March 16



**Don
Bennett**

Don Bennett, who has served as interim executive director of the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board since July 2006, has been named deputy director of the Washington Higher Education Coordinating Board effective March 16, 2007.

Announcing the appointment, Ann Daley, HECB executive director, said Bennett would bring a strong background of management experience, knowledge of state government and specific understanding of the state's workforce training and adult education needs to the HECB, which is charged with providing broad oversight for post-secondary education in the state.

Bennett, who earned his law degree from the University of Puget Sound School of Law in 1986, also has served as executive secretary of the Personnel Appeals Board, as leadership counsel for the Senate Democratic Caucus, as director for policy and legal services of the Washington State School Directors' Association, and as staff legal counsel for the Education Committee of the Washington State Senate.

"I am pleased to join the Higher Education Coordinating Board in its important work to expand educational opportunities for all of Washington's

citizens and build the highly-skilled workforce that our state's economy demands," Bennett said.

As a judge advocate in the Washington Army National Guard, Bennett is the primary legal adviser to the Commander of the 81st Brigade Combat Team based in Seattle. He was deployed to Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom for a year in 2004-2005. He has served in the Washington Army National Guard since 1988 and currently holds the rank of Lieutenant Colonel.

Bennett, a Puyallup resident, has been active in community service, serving as chair of that city's Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee and as vice-chair of its Salary Commission, as well as in the Puyallup School District, where he has served on the Superintendent's Advisory Council.

He and his wife, Anne Bennett, librarian at Graham-Kapowsin High School, have two daughters.

Web-based advising system 'goes live' at two institutions

After a successful pilot test and positive response from statewide focus groups, the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Education has recommended that \$3.8 million be appropriated to further develop a statewide Web-based advising system during the next biennium.

The system, which went 'live' for all students at Bellevue Community College and the University of Washington in February, enables students to compare and contrast educational programs, program prerequisites and other admissions-related information across all post-secondary institutions.



The system will be of particular benefit to students who enter the state's community colleges intending to transfer to a four-year institution. It will allow them to plan their degree pathway more precisely by showing them in one, easily accessible format, exactly which courses they need to gain admission to a specific bachelor's degree program.

Students at Bellevue Community College and the University of Washington who participated in the January pilot test gave the system an "A."

The test was such a success that a large number of Bellevue students who tested the software asked if they could continue using it, even though it wasn't being released for several weeks.

Focus group participants were clear: the system is a great idea and long overdue because degree pathways through the higher education system have become increasingly complex.

A series of focus groups also were conducted in January at the state's public four-year campuses. The groups included students, faculty and staff from both two- and four-year institutions.

The groups were conducted to further determine stakeholders' highest priorities and expectations for the system.

Focus group participants stated the system should be highly efficient and user friendly, providing information suited to their specific needs within no more than three mouse clicks.

The system also was viewed favorably by panelists from smaller, less-well-funded and more geographically remote institutions, who are enthusiastic about its ability to improve communication with prospective students.

All those interviewed stressed that maintaining the system's accuracy was of paramount importance and that funding must continue over time for training, updates, improvements, and student-suggested changes.

The HECB proposal provides statewide linkages to all institutions. The State Board for Community and Technical Colleges is developing a complementary online advising system for the community colleges only. The HECB and SBCTC are working closely to ensure the two systems are compatible. The HECB system is expected to be available statewide in June 2009.

HECB publishes "key facts" about higher education

Basic information about such issues as student enrollment, state funding, and financial aid programs can be found in the 2007 edition of "Key facts about higher education in Washington," released this month by the HECB.

The [Key facts](http://www.hecb.wa.gov/news/newsfacts/KeyFacts2007.asp) publication is available at: www.hecb.wa.gov/news/newsfacts/KeyFacts2007.asp

Legislative News

HECB governance

On Feb. 28, the House Higher Education Committee passed House Bill 1883 by an 8-0 vote. Under the version approved:

- The governor appoints the HECB executive director from a list of three or more names provided by the board;
- The HECB executive director serves at the pleasure of the board;
- The board's composition remains unchanged;
- The HECB Advisory Council members are unchanged except that OSPI can send a representative;
- The strategic master plan for higher education becomes a 10-year plan with four-year updates; and
- A 'five-corners' task force will be convened by the governor to include the chairs and ranking minority members of the House and Senate Higher Education committees to ensure statewide needs and priorities are a focus of the HECB's policy and planning initiatives.

Performance agreements

[House Bill 2375](#), submitted by Reps. Jarrett, Wallace and Priest, would implement performance funding agreements between the four-year public universities and the state. The bill defines performance agreements in the following way.

"The legislature intends to explore a new relationship between the state and public institutions of higher education that includes dialogue and negotiation over goals, priorities, performance and resources, and also includes explicit

commitments made by each party aimed at achieving agreed-upon outcomes."

Performance agreements would:

- Be between the state and the governing board of an institution of higher education (or with the SBCTC on behalf of all community and technical colleges)
- Address statewide goals and priorities of the Legislature
- Contain goals and commitments from both the institution and the state
- Include quantifiable performance measures and benchmarks
- Reflect the unique role and mission of the institution within the state's higher education system.

Performance agreements would last for six years with the option to revisit them biennially if necessary.

The data necessary to monitor the agreements shall be reported to OFM, the Legislature, and the HECB.

Performance agreements would contain indicators that measure outcomes concerning cost, quality, timeliness of student progress toward degrees and certifications, and articulation between and within the K-12 and higher education systems.

The agreements also would specify each institution's share of enrollments and degrees needed to meet the state's goals and strategic direction and identify the level of resources necessary to meet the performance objectives subject to approval by the Legislature.

BOARD AND COMMITTEE SCHEDULE - 2007

	Full Board	Executive Committee	Education Committee	Fiscal Committee	Financial Aid Committee
MARCH	March 22	TBD	March 5 1:30 – 3:30 p.m. HECB	TBD	March 6 2 - 4 p.m. Teleconference HECB
APRIL	April 26		April 3 1 – 3 p.m. HECB		April 11 2 - 4 p.m. Teleconference HECB
MAY	May 24		May 7 1 – 3 p.m. Seattle		May 10 2 - 4 p.m. Teleconference HECB
JUNE	June 28		June 4 2 – 4 p.m. Seattle		June 14 2 - 4 p.m. Teleconference HECB
JULY	July 26		July 9 1 – 3 p.m. Seattle		July 12 2 - 4 p.m. Teleconference HECB
AUGUST	No meeting				
SEPTEMBER	Sept 27		Sept 10 1 – 3 p.m. Seattle		Sept 13 2 - 4 p.m. Teleconference HECB
OCTOBER	Oct 25		Oct 8 1 – 3 p.m. Seattle		Oct 11 2 - 4 p.m. Teleconference HECB
NOVEMBER	Nov 15		Nov 7 1 – 3 p.m. Seattle		Nov 1 2 - 4 p.m. Teleconference HECB
DECEMBER	Dec 13		Nov 26 1 – 3 p.m. Seattle		Nov 29 2 - 4 p.m. Teleconference HECB

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