

SUMMARY OF BOARD PANEL DISCUSSIONS

June 28, 2007

Changing demographics signal need to strengthen diversity in higher education

By 2030 Washington's population will have reached 8.6 million people, an increase of 37 percent from 2005.

More than a third of the state's population will be composed of people from diverse racial or ethnic backgrounds, compared with 23 percent in 2005.

The proportion of the state's population 65 and older will have nearly doubled. And, the state will face increased economic challenges in the growing global marketplace.

HECB staff presented a report analyzing these and other trends to the board and its Advisory Council at their June 28 meeting at the University of Washington Bothell.

The report shows that Washington, a net importer of people holding bachelor's degrees, must make a comprehensive effort to raise the level of postsecondary degree attainment among its population, especially among those from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds.

Otherwise, the state's ability to compete in the global economy will be compromised as more and more states – and other countries – compete for highly qualified workers in an increasingly knowledge-driven economy.

Developed by HECB research analysts working with state demographers and institutional research directors, the report will be used to establish priorities for the 2008 Strategic Master Plan for Higher Education.

Among those priorities are likely to be goals for increased degree attainment among under-represented groups.

The report shows that Hispanic and mixed race students, the most rapidly growing part of the population, are failing to advance in sufficient numbers throughout the P-20 system.

At the same time, Washington continues as one of the top net importers of bachelor's degrees, the report illustrated.

"What this means," said board member **Jesus Hernandez** of Wenatchee, "is that Washington is failing to educate a significant percentage of its population at the same time it is importing highly educated workers to fill high-paying jobs."

Washington is seventh among all U.S. states in terms of the number of degrees it imports compared with the number it produces, and fifth in the net in-migration of adults with bachelor's degrees or higher. An increasing number of states (34) are now net degree importers.

Efforts underway to better prepare students for success in college

The board heard from two K-12 experts who stressed the need for stronger bridges between higher education and the K-12 system.

Kathe Taylor, policy director for the Washington State Board of Education, said better student preparation is one vital component of a seamless system.

The SBE is focusing on dramatically raising student achievement, with an emphasis on helping students from low-income families succeed in college.

Taylor also described the disconnect between the credits required to graduate from high school and those needed to enter college – which is especially true for mathematics, science and foreign languages.

She said the SBE has created the Meaningful High School Diploma Committee to review graduation requirements and help define the knowledge and skills students need to succeed in work and college in the 21st century.

Taylor recommended that the 2008 Strategic Master Plan include a number of incentives aimed at encouraging more students to prepare for college, including:

- ✓ Faculty outreach efforts that could expose middle and high school students to life on a college campus;
- ✓ Collaborative efforts between college faculty and middle and high school teachers to improve teaching and learning;
- ✓ Integrated data systems that could follow students from pre-K through higher education;
- ✓ Strategies to boost the number of teachers in shortage areas;
- ✓ Scholarships and loans for students from under-represented groups;
- ✓ Outreach programs that connect college students with middle and high school students; and
- ✓ More ways to formally recognize students who meet WASL standards.

Dr. Paul Rosier, executive director of the Washington Association of School Administrators, described an emerging goal in K-12: Preparing all or nearly all students for college, work, and citizenship.

Rosier said young students must be empowered to make choices in their lives, and that “personalized student

guidance systems” are being introduced in districts throughout the state. The state would do well to shift the focus away from a rigid assessment system, instead emphasizing the skills and knowledge students need to succeed.

Today, about 90 percent of high school freshmen think they are going to college, Rosier said, and we need to make sure students understand early on what it means to be ready for college. Today, about 55 percent of Washington high school graduates go directly to college.

Also, he said a recent statewide emphasis on literacy has led to significant increases in both reading and writing, and the focus is shifting to math and science.

Reaching agreement on what and how to best teach remains a challenge. The **LASER** Science program (supported, in part, by science-based businesses) and the **Transition Math Project** are two excellent examples.

Rosier agreed that one of the most significant challenges facing education as a whole continues to be finding ways for the K-12 and higher education systems to work together.

New technology transforming higher education

Bellevue Community College President **Jean Floten** illustrated the dramatic changes in teaching and learning that typify life in the digital age.

She described the new generation of learners as “digital natives” – students who have grown up with technology and have come to rely on it for a multitude of uses, from communication and learning to buying and selling.

Floten said the difference in learning practices between digital natives and “digital immigrants” – the older generation – is dramatic.

While baby boomers are used to instructor-centered lectures, individual learning, infrequent feedback, and textbooks, the digital generation is learner focused, with an emphasis on collaborative learning, immediate feedback, and scanning the Internet for information.

Floten said the Strategic Master Plan should consider how competitive Washington wants to be in the area of educational technology – as well as how the state can maximize the use of technology, remove barriers, maximize efficiency, and generate sufficient funding.

Andreas Brockhaus, manager of Learning Technologies at UWB, described how technology is able to connect students with their instructors and with each other, on what is largely a commuter campus.

Brockhaus demonstrated the online course management system called “Blackboard,” which includes links to course materials and student groups.

About 60 percent of all UWB courses have a Blackboard component, and the tool is easy to use.

According to Brockhaus, technology also can improve in-class discussions. The campus has been experimenting with the use of hand-held “clickers” that enable students to register their opinions in class at the touch of a button.

Brockhaus was joined by **John Bourne**, executive director of the Sloan Consortium, for a tour of the **Second Life** Web site, an online teaching environment that offers colleges and universities the opportunity to create virtual universities with access to a wide range of media and information tools.

Visitors are able to create an identity on the site and virtually travel the

globe in search of classrooms, libraries, museums. Users can even visit ancient Rome, space stations, movie theatres, and concert halls. At any one time, tens of thousands of users are logged on worldwide.

Several hundred universities now host classes in the 3-D virtual world, and Brockhaus said Second Life has the potential to serve new populations of students, improve retention and graduation rates, increase learning effectiveness, reduce costs, and improve international communication.

Murial Oaks, dean of the Center for Distance Learning and Professional Education at Washington State University, updated the board on distance learning strategies at WSU.

According to Oaks, a number of businesses – including Microsoft, Dell, and Apple – are working with public institutions on a project called P21.

The P21 report outlines teaching and learning in the 21st century; recognizing that technology is more than just a delivery system, but increasingly affects the way students learn.

Oaks identified a new set of skills students need to succeed in the 21st century:

- Global awareness
- Self direction
- Collaboration
- Technological and information literacy
- Critical thinking and problem solving
- Flexibility and adaptability
- Innovation and improvement skills
- Communication skills

She said online learning is a strategic asset that can enhance recruitment and assessment, retention, enrollment management, and degree completion.