

Meeting of the
OKLAHOMA STATE REGENTS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION
February 1, 2018

AGENDA ITEM #18:

Task Force on the Future of Higher Education: Modernization, Efficiencies, and Innovations.

SUBJECT: Acceptance of State Regents' Task Force on the Future of Higher Education Report

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the State Regents accept the report developed and approved by the Task Force on the Future of Higher Education.

BACKGROUND:

Given the changing landscape of higher education, at their meeting on Thursday, March 23, 2017, the State Regents approved the formation of a citizens' Task Force on the Future of Higher Education to undertake an extensive planning initiative that will position the Oklahoma state system of higher education to better meet current and future challenges. The efforts of the Task Force will emphasize the state system's focus on modernization, efficiencies, and innovation.

The State Regents accepted membership for the Task Force on the Future of Higher Education at their meeting on Thursday, April 20, 2017. The Task Force is comprised of the State Regents, private citizens, college and university representatives, and the designees of Governor Mary Fallin, Speaker of the Oklahoma House of Representatives Charles McCall, and Senate President Pro Tempore Mike Schulz. Citizen members of the Task Force are well-respected Oklahomans who come from a variety of professional and educational backgrounds and represent different geographic regions within the state.

Dr. William E. "Brit" Kirwan, Chancellor Emeritus of the University System of Maryland, serves as lead advisor to the task force. Dr. Kirwan is a senior fellow at the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges (AGB) and previously served as president of The Ohio State University and the University of Maryland. Dr. Sally Mason, President Emerita of the University of Iowa, and Mr. Ken Knueven also served as AGB consultants to the Task Force.

POLICY ISSUES:

One of the major responsibilities of the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education is to establish goals for the future and to engage in strategic planning activities designed to help our colleges and universities achieve those goals. Planning is implicit in the responsibilities of a

coordinating board, and throughout its history, the State Regents have participated in several systematic planning efforts through the use of citizen committees, including *Planning for the 70s*, *Planning for the 80s*, and *The Citizens' Commission on the Future of Oklahoma Higher Education* in 1996-97.

The Task Force on the Future of Higher Education conducted a systematic and thorough review of the current status of higher education in Oklahoma; examined existing initiatives and best practices; and developed findings and recommendations on strategies that best support improving quality, access, affordability, and efficiency in the Oklahoma state system of higher education.

ANALYSIS:

The Task Force convened in May 2017 to begin discussion on the development of recommendations that best position Oklahoma's state system of higher education to meet the future challenges of maintaining accessibility and affordability without compromising educational quality.

The work of the Task Force was primarily conducted through four subcommittees:

- College Degree Completion and Workforce Development Initiatives
- Academic Program Innovations and Online Education
- System Structure
- Fiscal Solutions, Efficiencies, Affordability, and Technology.

Members were assigned to one of these four subcommittees, which met regularly from June through November 2017. During subcommittee meetings, members studied best practices across the nation and in Oklahoma and discussed how to develop recommendations that could be successfully implemented in Oklahoma. Subcommittee progress reports were provided during meetings of the full Task Force on September 6, 2017 and October 18, 2017.

While each subcommittee had a specific focus, certain common themes emerged from the work of the subcommittees. These included:

- The power of predictive analytics.
- Development of microcredentials to meet workforce needs in real time.
- Increased financial support from the Legislature for the concurrent enrollment program to advance degree completion efforts.
- Dedicated focus on adult student programs, scholarships, and credit for prior learning.
- Scaling delivery of online education.
- Consolidation of administrative structures and functions.
- Reemployment of cost savings to support the mission of the institution.

After six months of study and deliberations, the Task Force voted to approve all subcommittee recommendations at its meeting on December 6, 2017. Specific recommendations from each subcommittee are as follows.

College Degree Completion and Workforce Development Initiatives

Data Analytics

Data or predictive analytics is beginning to emerge as a very promising and powerful tool in higher education. The State Regents should provide opportunities for institutions to learn more about the appropriate use of data analytics and they should facilitate and encourage a statewide implementation plan that accelerates the adoption of best practices in data analytics to enhance student experience and success through the use of predictive tools.

1. The State Regents should include funding for the implementation of predictive analytics on a systemwide basis in its annual funding request to the Legislature. The funding request should include a timeframe for implementation, the expected return on investment, and a plan for reporting results on the benefits gained from implementing the use of data analytics systemwide.
2. The State Regents should direct institutions to develop comprehensive plans on the use of data analytics to streamline administrative processes, generate revenue through increased enrollment and improved retention rates, and improve student success through enhanced proactive advisement and individualized support services.
 - a. Information regarding the use of data analytics will be embedded in the annual academic plan that is submitted to the State Regents.
3. The State Regents should empower and provide a charge to the Councils on Information Technology, Instruction and Student Affairs to recommend specific implementation strategies that would maximize the effectiveness of data analytics on a statewide basis.
4. The State Regents should facilitate the development of a consortium of institutions with like missions to use data analytics to solve institutional problems.
5. The State Regents should continue to work with the Oklahoma State Department of Education to develop a robust, comprehensive data pipeline. The ability to link student level K-12 and postsecondary data would greatly enhance the ability to determine factors that predict student success.

Workforce Development

In 2014, only 40.1 percent of Oklahoma's workforce had a degree, certificate or high-quality credential. Projections show that 70 percent of Oklahoma's jobs will require some education or training beyond high school by 2025. To address this skills gap, Governor Fallin has developed the Launch Oklahoma initiative, setting an ambitious goal of having 70 percent of Oklahoma's adult workforce having attained a college degree, certificate or other high quality, recognized credential by 2025. The State Regents should develop strategies that quickly address workforce needs and promote degree and certificate completion in high-demand occupations.

1. The State Regents should work with the Council of Presidents and chambers of commerce to develop a statewide strategy to engage business and industry in actively working with Oklahoma colleges and universities better align academic programs to meet current and projected workforce needs.
2. The State Regents should require that any new degree program request 1) provides evidence that the program will produce graduates related to the 100 critical occupations identified by the Governor's Oklahoma Works and Launch Oklahoma initiatives; or 2) provides evidence that the program will produce graduates related to one of the five key wealth generating ecosystems (aerospace and defense, energy, agriculture and biosciences, information and financial services, transportation and logistics).
3. The State Regents should develop policies and procedures to accelerate time to approve new workforce-oriented programs needed by business, including microcredentials.
 - a. Microcredentials should be developed in partnership with business.
 - b. Microcredentials should be designed to be stackable.
4. Institutions should promote partnerships with business to offer internship and apprenticeship opportunities to students.
5. The State Regents should continue to fund and promote adult degree completion strategies through the Reach Higher program and the Adult Promise grant from the Lumina Foundation.
6. The State Regents should develop enhanced marketing strategies for OKcollegestart.org as a resource for traditional and adult students' college preparation, college degree planning, college financial planning, career development, and other services.

Degree Completion

In 2011, Oklahoma joined the Complete College America (CCA) consortium of states, making increasing college degree completion a top state priority. The State Regents should encourage and support a statewide approach that would accelerate and scale the implementation of data-proven completion strategies to achieve Oklahoma's college degree completion goal of increasing the number of degrees and certificates earned by 67 percent by 2023.

1. The State Regents should develop and present to the Governor and State Legislature a budget request that fully funds Oklahoma's college completion efforts.
2. The State Regents should endorse and support the full implementation of Oklahoma's statewide Guided Pathways plan as developed by the Oklahoma State Team for Complete College America. The following areas will be emphasized:
 - a. Implementation of meta-majors statewide

- b. Development of student on-boarding that provides informed choice for degree programs prior to enrolling (career opportunities and outcomes)
 - c. Develop term-by-term on-time degree maps
 - d. Provide critical course path guarantee
 - e. Implement proactive advising protocols that track student progression and provide alerts
 - f. Communicate results and outcomes about the above strategies/policies
3. The State Regents should work with institutions to facilitate and implement reverse transfer agreements between community colleges and four-year institutions.
4. Institutions should continue to scale and strengthen co-requisite remedial education offerings.
5. The State Regents should work with institutions and appropriate councils to expand opportunities for students to earn college credit through competency-based prior learning assessments.
6. The State Regents should make the Course Equivalency Project more accessible and user-friendly.
7. The State Regents should continue to work with colleges and universities through the work of the Math Success Group to develop multiple math pathways.

Concurrent Enrollment

Concurrent enrollment has proven to be a highly effective tool in developing a high school to college bridge that accelerates time to degree for students, improves student matriculation, and strengthens high school and college relations. The State Regents should support strategies that ensure the integrity and expansion of concurrent enrollment opportunities for Oklahoma students and families.

1. The State Regents should continue to request full funding of the concurrent enrollment tuition waiver program for high school seniors by the Legislature.
 - a. The total estimated cost for FY2018 is \$10.6 million, while the program is currently funded at only \$2.8 million (26.8% of program cost).
2. The State Regents and the Legislature should expand the concurrent enrollment tuition waiver program to high school juniors, contingent upon additional funding from the Legislature.
 - a. Develop metrics to document the success of concurrent enrollment and its return on investment for the State and provide this to the Governor and Legislature.
3. The State Regents should initiate a study of alternative funding models for the concurrent enrollment tuition waiver program.

Scholarships and Financial Aid

College is an increasingly important investment for students and their families, and Oklahoma is among the most affordable states. Oklahoma has the 10th-lowest student debt level in the nation, and half of all Oklahoma graduates leave college with no loan debt. The State Regents currently provide a number of resources that help students and their families plan for and manage the cost of earning a college degree. Recognizing the important role that financial aid plays in promoting college access and completion, the State Regents should develop strategies that facilitate easier access to financial aid and scholarship information and opportunities for students.

1. The State Regents should coordinate the creation of a statewide financial aid/scholarship matching tool for students to identify potential financial aid/scholarship opportunities, with the goal of maximizing the disbursement of available scholarship funds to students each year.
2. The State Regents should strongly encourage colleges and universities to develop partnerships with local communities and businesses to provide scholarships for adult degree completion through the Reach Higher initiative and include state matching funds for these scholarships in the annual systemwide budget request.
3. The State Regents should encourage institutions to create and/or expand a seed fund to provide emergency aid for students in need to prevent dropout.
4. The State Regents should initiate a study to determine the capacity of institutions to increase fundraising efforts for need-based financial aid.
 - a. Institutions should place greater emphasis on need-based financial aid in fundraising.
5. The State Regents should initiate a study to examine the role of unmet financial need for students nearing the end of their college career.
6. The State Regents should initiate a study to determine the impact of microcredential and competency-based education programs on financial aid eligibility.

Adult Degree Completion

Oklahoma currently has over 70,000 adult citizens that have earned, on average, more than 72 college hours without earning a college degree. The State Regents should explore and support strategies that would maximize adult degree completion in Oklahoma.

1. The State Regents should continue to support adult degree completion through the Reacher Higher initiatives, which includes the Adult Promise grant from the Lumina Foundation.
2. The State Regents should work with institutions to develop a systemwide strategy for identification and outreach to students who have dropped out but have earned a significant number of college credit hours.

3. Institutions should partner with local businesses to develop programs that provide scholarships or tuition reimbursement to encourage employee degree completion or skill acquisition that meets business needs.
4. The State Regents should expand online education opportunities for adult students as recommended by the Academic Program Innovations and Online Education Subcommittee.
5. The State Regents should explore the development of potential models for competency-based degrees in conjunction with recommendations from the Academic Program Innovations and Online Education Subcommittee.

Military-Connected Students

Each year, thousands of veterans take courses at Oklahoma colleges and universities. With the revamped GI Bill, veteran enrollment numbers have increased dramatically. One of the State Regents' top priorities is to provide support for our veterans and to address the unique issues they face in returning to our colleges and universities after military service.

1. The State Regents and institutions should develop a statewide outreach strategy for assisting military-connected students and their families to earn a college degree.
2. To facilitate degree completion for veteran students, the State Regents should develop a matrix of course equivalencies for students with military service experience.

Academic Program Innovations and Online Education

Academic Programs

1. The State Regents should provide leadership and resources to accelerate the development and expansion of joint degree programs and statewide seamless transfer articulation agreements between and among institutions.
2. The State Regents should provide a statewide framework and policies for institutions to develop microdegrees/microcredentials to meet workforce demand in real time.
 - a. Workforce focused microcredentials should be offered primarily through online delivery channels.
 - b. Open/flexible course and program start dates should be explored to allow for rapid completion of credential at low costs.
 - c. Microcredentials should be based on centers of existing expertise and excellence from state institutions.
 - d. Microcredentials will be developed, as appropriate, in coordination with the career technology centers and local industry to maximize career opportunities, limit course duplication, and enhance cost efficiencies.

- e. The State Regents should consider the development of a centralized platform to manage microcredentials.
3. The State Regents should develop a systemwide strategy for building state-of-the-art data analytics capacity at all state system institutions and secure the resources necessary for its implementation so that colleges and universities can make systematic and data-informed decisions on improving student success, enrollment growth, financial sustainability, and institutional advancement.
4. The State Regents should collaborate with the Council on Instruction, the Council on Student Affairs, and the Economic Development Council to advance the development and assessment of 21st century workforce-ready skills. This strategic systemwide effort would support the development of "out-of-classroom" skills, such as critical thinking, leadership, teamwork, and civic engagement. To the extent possible, secondary schools should be included to create a seamless transition of these skills from high school to postsecondary education. In addition, this strategic initiative should provide a mechanism for students to communicate these workforce-ready skills to employers.
5. The State Regents, in collaboration with the Council of Presidents and the Council on Instruction, should research the design and implementation of competency-based education within the State System of Higher Education.
 - a. The State Regents should undertake a comprehensive study of existing competency-based education programs, such as the University of Wisconsin model, and the potential implications for Title IV funding.
 - b. The State Regents should define and implement incentives, as funding allows, to identify and support select programs and institutions for competency-based education expansion.
 - c. Ideal programs would likely be workforce-focused and provide a pathway for career advancement for students.
 - d. A program of this nature may include collaborations between higher education institutions and be delivered primarily through online channels. In addition, collaborations with technology centers should be explored as appropriate.
6. The State Regents should coordinate the establishment of an organization with the mission of identifying, creating, growing, and sharing emerging academic innovations. This structure would mitigate risk for state institutions, while allowing institutional leaders to benefit from the latest thinking, research, and academic innovation options available for adoption. Such a structure could be a collaborative effort of the Council on Instruction, Council on Student Affairs, and the Council for Online Learning Excellence.
7. The State Regents should support the continued expansion of the concurrent enrollment waiver program by developing a three-year plan to:
 - a. Secure resources to fully fund existing concurrent enrollment activities.

- b. Review data from expanded concurrent pilot programs around the state to find best practices in student success in these programs and collaborate with the Council on Instruction to revise State Regents' policies to incorporate successful strategies for statewide implementation.
 - c. Provide data to the state Legislature regarding the success of the current program and the expanded program to ensure continuation of a fully funded program for all concurrent students statewide.
- 8. The State Regents should continue collaboration with the Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education for traditional students and returning adults to provide the most appropriate pathway for career growth and cost-effective credential completion.
- 9. The State Regents should develop a systemwide strategy for institutions to provide both academic and non-academic supports to students. This strategy should:
 - a. Recognize the changing demographics of traditional and adult students, and direct resources to programs that serve these students' needs, encouraging flexible policy and procedures to be developed in collaboration with the Council on Instruction and the Council on Student Affairs.
 - b. Assist institutions in creating public-private partnerships to address non-academic needs of adult students. Examples include programs to eliminate stresses for returning adults by providing financial supports, textbook assistance, comprehensive and personalized advising, and career development services.
 - c. Assist institutions in demonstrating the value in creating public-private partnerships to address academic needs of adult students by providing cohort programs, small classes, accelerated course offerings, online course offerings, etc. to facilitate better learning outcomes for returning adults.
 - d. Provide research related to outcomes from these supports found in other states as emerging programs and the demonstrated return on investment.

Online Education

- 1. The State Regents should request funding from the Legislature and private sources to devote resources to expand the effective use of Open Educational Resources (OER) to reduce textbook costs and improve student success.
- 2. The State Regents should invest in and promote statewide professional development for faculty and staff to improve online instruction and student success.
- 3. The State Regents should work with participating institutions to develop common online platforms and facilitate user groups for existing platforms. Adopting a common online platform should be a long-term goal.
- 4. The State Regents should request funding from the Legislature to develop a systemwide delivery model for online education, with the goals of increasing access, value, quality, and growing a highly educated workforce and citizenry.

System Structure

1. The State Regents and Chancellor should encourage governing boards to explore more cooperation on academic programs and administration in order to better streamline initiatives across the system and to ensure best practices are scaled across multiple institutions.
 - a. It should be acknowledged that the recommendation to reduce the number of governing boards will not result in significant savings in and of itself. The potential for combining similar institutions under the same governing board presents the opportunity for more easily streamlining the administration, Human Resources (HR), payroll, finance, and Information Technology (IT) functions of these institutions, which is anticipated to result in cost savings and better, more efficient business processes.
2. The Legislature should create and fund a seed fund to provide financial incentives to encourage voluntary mergers of institutions. Institutional mergers should be undertaken with the following objectives: improve student success; maintain access; and maximize cost savings.
3. The State Regents and Chancellor should encourage and facilitate discussions on voluntary mergers or the implementation of partnerships between institutions.
4. The State Regents and Chancellor should encourage and facilitate the development of service centers serving multiple institutions regionally.
5. Governing boards with authority for a single institution should be given a period until June 30, 2019, to enter into voluntary mergers/partnerships with the University of Oklahoma Board of Regents, the Oklahoma A&M Board of Regents, or the Regional University System of Oklahoma Board of Regents. After June 30, 2019, the State Regents will recommend that remaining institutions be governed by or merged with the University of Oklahoma Board of Regents, the Oklahoma A&M Board of Regents, or the Regional University System of Oklahoma Board of Regents, with the exception of any two-year community college that is a land-grant institution (Northern Oklahoma College) or receives local ad valorem funding (Oklahoma City Community College, Rose State College, and Tulsa Community College), which would retain their own respective governing boards. Two-year community colleges or governing boards with a single institution should be governed by or merged with the University of Oklahoma Board of Regents, the Oklahoma A&M Board of Regents, or the Regional University System of Oklahoma Board of Regents. Following the merger, regents and trustees currently serving on the governing boards for single institutions will be converted to advisory board positions with gubernatorial appointments.

6. Encourage collaboration and formation of partnerships between large urban two-year institutions, such as Oklahoma City Community College, Rose State College and OSU-OKC.¹

Fiscal Solutions, Efficiencies, Affordability, and Technology

1. The State Regents and Chancellor should facilitate the establishment of multi-institutional partnerships to scale-up back office function consolidation in administrative function areas (for example: Information Technology (IT), human resources (HR), purchasing, finance and accounting, and academic learning management systems (LMS), etc.).
2. Any cost savings achieved through implementation of efficiencies should be reinvested in initiatives related to enrollment, retention, student success, faculty quality, etc. that result in improving degree completion outcomes and generating increased revenue.
3. The State Regents should require that every institution utilize a predictive analytics data program to aid in enrollment strategies and improve student retention and graduation rates. Information regarding the use of predictive analytics should be embedded in the institution's annual academic plan that is submitted to the State Regents.
 - a. Institutions are strongly encouraged to participate in a contract for predictive analytics through the State Regents or initiate their own contract.
4. The State Regents should implement a financial fiscal review and long-term (at least every five years) viability assessment of each institution to be conducted on a rotating basis with at least five institutions assessed every year.
 - a. As part of the financial review and viability assessment, institutions would be required to submit partnership plans identifying current and potential strategic partnerships with other institutions, governmental agencies, nonprofit organizations, private sector businesses, etc., that promote continued institutional viability.
5. Governing boards should undertake a review of their respective institutions to determine if branch campuses/campus sites function as cost centers, are self-sustaining, or contribute to the financial stability of the institution.
6. The State Regents should eliminate line-item allocation funding for special programs and branch campuses.

¹ Tulsa Community College is exempted due to its statutory responsibility to provide the lower division coursework for the Tulsa regional area.

- a. Consolidating institutional allocations would incentivize governing boards to consolidate purchasing contracts and improve back-office and administrative efficiencies and provide governing boards more flexibility in setting their institutional priorities.
7. The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education and the Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education should establish a working group to inventory existing partnerships between higher education and CareerTech and to study the development of new strategic partnerships, including academic agreements, administration agreements, and the joint use of facilities.
8. The State Regents' Council on Information Technology will lead an initiative to coordinate the purchase of common computer-related applications and technology across the higher education system. Leveraging the purchasing power of several institutions allows OSRHE to procure IT materials and services at a lower cost, providing for an increased level of efficiencies, cost savings and an overall improved academic experience. In addition, increased buying power will allow smaller institutions to invest in technologies they may have been previously unable to afford, ensuring all students, faculty and staff across our higher education system have access to the same technologies.
9. State system colleges and universities should support the State Regents and Chancellor in striving to maintain OneNet under the State Regents to ensure that all higher education institutions and other OneNet clients benefit from the cost savings provided through OneNet contracts and services.
 - a. OneNet should explore revenue enhancements and/or other strategies designed to further improve economic development, job creation, and quality of life, with a particular emphasis on benefitting rural communities.

Supplement available upon request.