



System Design Study

Work Plan, March 9, 2009 *Revised*

Background

In 2008, the Higher Education Coordinating Board developed its 10-year Strategic Master Plan for higher education. The plan called for a sustained, statewide effort to raise educational attainment throughout the state of Washington. Specific targets set in the Master Plan, and adopted by the 2008 Legislature, call for increasing degree and certificate attainment by more than 40% by 2018. Specific targets were set for increases in mid-level degree and certificate production (9,400), bachelor's degree production (13,800), and advanced degree production (8,600), to reach a total increase of an additional 31,800 degrees and certificates by 2018. Raising educational attainment levels will also promote economic growth, another important goal of the *2008 Strategic Master Plan for Higher Education in Washington*.

In a companion piece, the Board also developed a process to implement the Master Plan Goals. This Implementation Plan includes four key priorities, as outlined in the introduction (p. *ii*) and described throughout the document:

- 1) Preserve the progress we have made by sustaining current levels of support for higher education.
- 2) Build a larger pipeline to postsecondary education that captures more students graduating from K-12 schools and more working adults.
- 3) Expand on demand by targeting growth and tailoring institutional plans to respond to known demographic, regional and workforce needs (pp. 11-12).
- 4) Redesign the delivery system for higher education by creating a new process to determine whether and where to build new campuses or centers, develop new programs, expand eLearning and other delivery modes, and change college and university missions (p. 11).¹

The Work Plan described in this document outlines the study to design the delivery system for higher education so that the goals of the 2008 Master Plan can be achieved.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine Washington's higher education system and develop recommendations for its design so that the Master Plan goals to raise educational attainment levels and to promote economic growth can be achieved. To accomplish these goals, higher education may need to do

¹ Washington Higher Education Coordinating Board. (2008). *Opportunities for Change: Implementing the 2008 Strategic Master Plan for Higher Education*. Olympia, Washington.

things differently, to consider innovative new approaches and to discern where and how these innovations can best be applied to deliver higher education throughout the state.

In particular, three purposes will guide the work of Study Group members:

- 1) to develop recommendations on how to best deliver undergraduate and graduate education throughout Washington,
- 2) to develop recommendations on how to best use Washington higher education system's capacity to deliver mid-level, baccalaureate and graduate degree programs and certificates, and
- 3) to develop rational rules for growth and change, using existing resources efficiently and identifying areas that need new or expanded resources.

Problem Statement

Over time, higher education systems grow and change in response to internal and external prompts from policy-makers, institutions, and leaders. The ways in which higher education systems evolve have been studied for some time. Issues arise when

. . . educationally under-served areas experience[e] rapid population growth and need[] access to graduate and professional programs. Senior colleges exhibit too few differences in mission and purpose. "To many governors and legislators, all institutions look and sound alike and compete for the same programs and students" (Mingle, 1988, p. 3). Lawmakers wonder whether all programs offered are needed in all institutions. At the same time, needs may be unmet that the state or campus could fulfill.²

Nearly 30 years ago at the end of the 1980's, the newly formed HECB undertook a study of Washington's higher education system. Entitled "Building a System. Foundation Elements," this study resulted in the plan to establish branch campuses and define the "territory" of existing institutions, as well as other system policies. There have been other studies – studies to determine whether to establish a new campus to serve Skagit, Snohomish and Island Counties, for example. Although these regional studies have documented local needs, none have looked at the entire *system* of higher education throughout Washington to determine whether it was meeting the needs of the state and its citizens. With demand for higher education increasing at the same time that institutional capacity to deliver the additional education is under pressure, Washington needs a comprehensive review of its delivery system.

Washington's public higher education system is shaped like an "hour glass," with research universities and community colleges delivering the bulk of undergraduate education and the comprehensive universities delivering a much smaller portion (15%). Deciding when and where to build new educational centers or campuses, when and where to use eLearning, and how to best use existing resources to expand on demand and increase educational attainment levels throughout Washington are decisions that need to be based upon statewide and regional data and information. What Washington needs is a facile system that allows the state to achieve its long-term educational objectives. Designing such a system can only be accomplished through a coordinated effort.

² Hines, Edward R. (1988). State leadership in higher education. *Higher education and state government: Renewed partnership, cooperation or competition?* ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report #5, Washington, D.C.: Association for the Study of Higher Education.

Significance of the Study

The recommendations that will result from the HECB's System Design Study will shape higher education throughout Washington for the next decade. Recommendations will provide a coordinated—not ad hoc—response to current regional and institutional demands for additional campuses, new degree programs, and expanded missions, such as the community college baccalaureate. Included in this study are public and private two-year and four-year institutions.

It should be noted that this study is *not* an assessment of the needs for higher education in Washington. That work has already been done and results presented in the 2008 *Statewide Master Plan for Higher Education* and its *Implementation Plan*. Rather, this System Design Study will culminate in recommendations in how higher education resources should be aligned throughout Washington to meet the needs already identified in the *Statewide Master Plan*.

Study Questions

To accomplish the three purposes of this System Design Study, the following questions should serve as guides:

- 1) How and where should graduate and undergraduate degree and certificate programs throughout Washington be developed?
 - a. What is the profile of the potential student demand? Who is a potential student?
 - b. What is the appropriate size and mix of programs, including those delivered via technology, to address Washington's need for an educated workforce?
- 2) Where should these programs be developed to reach all areas of demand—urban/suburban/rural?
- 3) What are the rational rules for growth in the concept of “expand on demand,” that is, the demonstrated points at which students' demand for higher education warrants expansion, contraction, or elimination?
 - a. Where are students currently being served, including educational centers, regional, and main campuses and alternative delivery systems for these existing structures?
 - b. What critical mass of students constitutes demand for a new educational center or campus or expansion of an existing one?
 - c. What are the points at which employers' demand for higher education warrants expansion?
 - d. What are the points at which employers' lack of demand for higher education warrants contraction or elimination?
- 4) How can Washington's system of higher education, in concert with K-12 and dual credit programs, be transformed to provide resources to new student populations?
 - a. Are there innovative, flexible structures and partnerships that can deliver new educational opportunities to students?
 - b. Can programs be more strategically aligned and nimble (such as 3-year baccalaureate degrees, 18-month associate degrees, or creative scheduling options for short-term sessions that, collectively, add up to a full-term course) to provide greater educational opportunities for students?
 - c. How many institutional missions should be represented within Washington's system of higher education?

- 5) How can new learning modalities be developed or integrated to optimize access and success for different types of learners in college?

Scope of Study/Elements of Analysis

To carry out the System Design Study, Study Group members will need to review the following data and information, much of which has already been collected through the 2008 Master Plan initiative:

Institutions and Programs

- History and description of the current structure of Washington’s higher education system, including institutional and sector roles and missions
- Location, size (student FTE), and program offerings of existing two- and four-year institutions
- Analysis of state and regional degree production needs to describe existing institutional size, location, role and mission
- Analysis of performance output (enrollment and degree production), by institutional mission(s) and student demographics
- Identification of the strengths and weaknesses of the current higher education delivery system
- Options for expanding baccalaureate and graduate education programs
- Options for expanding mid-level degrees, certificates and apprenticeships
- Options for enhancing existing baccalaureate programs at regional centers (such as additional support from main campuses)

Students

- Current and projected participation rates through 2018, by student characteristics (income levels, underrepresented groups, “placebound” and commuter students, and so forth)
- Average time-to-degree, by student characteristics (recent high school graduates, returning adults, and so forth)
- Graduation rates by sector, by student characteristics
- Stop-out and drop-out rates, by sector, by student characteristics

Faculty

- Current and projected faculty demographics, including field of study
- Faculty reward structures, by institutional type

Policy Environment and Governance Structures

- Description and history of governance of Washington’s public higher education institutions, including regional and local mission differentiation and the current “hour-glass” shape of the overall system
- Description and timeline of key policy actions affecting the size and shape of the higher education system, including consideration of issues of organizational inertia
- Description of current fiscal climate, its potential to delay the pursuit of the Master Plan goals for educational attainment, and the resultant effects

- Policies affecting institutions in the future, including new land use and transportation imperatives that would affect future education investments, climate change recovery initiatives, and economic recovery initiatives
- Current legislative and public interest in our System Design Study, including fiscal, transportation, and planning issues
- Current fiscal implications surrounding possible recommendations of the System Design Study, including graduate education, online learning, and so forth

2008 Needs Assessment: Foundational Data

- Higher education attainment goals according to the *2008 Strategic Master Plan*
- Demographic projections according to the *2008 Strategic Master Plan* by geographic/census areas
- Occupational needs assessment according to the *2008 Implementation Plan*
- Identification of workforce shortages in specific mid-, baccalaureate, and graduate/professional programs as presented in the 2006 HECB Report and analyses for *2008 Strategic Master Plan*
- Operating and capital cost projections presented in the *2008 Implementation Plan*

Recommendations on System Alignment and Performance

- Institutional and sector roles and missions
- Policies and procedures to plan and authorize growth and change
- Needs of unique geographical/regional areas, along with any alternative delivery methods

Process

System Design Study Group Members

Members will include HEC Board members, representatives from public two- and four-year institutions and the independent colleges of Washington.

Meetings and Timelines

March 2 (Monday) 9:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m., SBCTC, 4th floor, Cascade A

Review background information (purpose, consistent with Master Plan implementation), Work Plan and timelines for the System Design Study.

(Mid-April, Proposed System Design Steering Study Committee meeting)

May 4 (Monday) 9:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m., WSU-West, 12th floor Conference Room, 520 Pike St., Seattle 98101

Review analysis for institutions & programs and discuss implications for system design.

HECB Education Committee Meeting: April 23

HECB Executive and Fiscal Committee Meetings: April 30

HECB meeting: May 12

June 15 (Monday) 9:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Review analyses on student and faculty characteristics and discuss implications for system design.

HECB Education Committee Meeting: June 9
HECB Executive and Fiscal Committee Meetings: June 11
HECB meeting: June 23 (WSU Pullman)
(NOTE: June 10-11 SBCTC meeting: State Board will discuss overall findings of SBCTC mission study and draft recommendations. June 26 SBCTC Task Force will meet to discuss final recommendations for the SBCTC mission study.)

(End of June, Proposed System Design Study Steering Committee meeting)

July 20 (Monday) 9:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Discuss policy environment and governance structures and 2008 needs assessment data and discuss implications for system design.

HECB Education Committee Meeting: July 9
HECB Executive and Fiscal Committee Meetings: July 16
HECB joint meeting with SBCTC: July 28 at Clover Park
HECB Board Retreat: August 27

September 16, (Wednesday) 9:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Draft recommendations on system alignment and performance

HECB Education Committee Meeting: September 10
HECB Executive and Fiscal Committee Meetings: September 17
HECB meeting with Advisory Council: September 29

(End of September, Proposed System Design Study Steering Committee meeting)

October 19 (Monday) 9:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Review and revise recommendations on system alignment and performance

HECB Education Committee Meeting: October 8
HECB Executive and Fiscal Committee Meetings: October 15
HECB meeting with Advisory Council: October 27

November 19 (Thursday) 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

HECB meeting: Adopt recommendations (Renton Tech)