WASHINGTON
HIGHER
EDUCATION
COORDINATING BOARD

December 2005

2004 Statewide Strategic Master Plan for Higher Education: *Update on Implementation*

In December 2004, the Higher Education Coordination Board submitted its 2004 Strategic Master Plan for Higher Education to the governor and legislature. State law requires the board to report annually on its progress in implementing the master plan. This document identifies the progress of the HECB and the state through November 2005 toward achieving the goals and implementing the specific strategic initiatives of the plan.

This report will be presented as an information item at the HECB meeting on December 15, 2005, and will be forwarded to the legislature and governor following the meeting.

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2004 Statewide Strategic Master Plan for Higher Education

Update on Implementation

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Goals

Helping students succeed; helping the state prosper

Washington must open the doors of higher education to a record number of students, and the state should do everything possible to help those students succeed. Students who earn college degrees, complete job training programs or improve their basic skills earn higher incomes, enjoy a better quality of life, and are less likely to be unemployed. A better-educated and more highly skilled workforce translates into higher tax revenue, greater civic participation, and stronger state economy.

Goal 1: Increase opportunities for students to earn degrees

The 2004 Strategic Master Plan called for a 12 percent increase in the total number of students who earn college degrees per year at public and private colleges and universities by 2010.

If this goal is attained, by 2010:

- The total number of students who earn college degrees will increase by 7,200 to reach 68,500 per year.
- The number of students who earn associate degrees will increase by 3,300 to reach 27,000 per year.
- The number of students who earn bachelor's degrees will increase by 2,800 to reach 30,000 per year.
- The number of students who earn graduate degrees will increase by 1,100 to reach 11,500 per year.

Goal 2: Respond to the state's economic needs

- The number of students who earn degrees and are prepared for work in high-demand fields will increase by 300 per year compared with current totals to reach 1,500 per year by 2010.
- The number of students who complete job training programs will increase by 12 percent to reach 25,000 per year.[1]
- The number of students in adult basic education and English as a Second Language programs who demonstrate improved literacy skills will grow by 19 percent to reach 20,525 by 2010.[1]

[1] The HECB adopted the goals of the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges for job training and adult literacy.

State progress in reaching the targets in the 2004 Strategic Master Plan				
	2003-04 (Actual)	2004-05 (Actual)	2009-10 (Targets)	Increase Required to Reach Target
Goal 1				
Associate Degrees	23,976	22,247	27,000	4,753
Bachelor's Degrees	27,240	28,265	30,000	1,735
Graduate Degrees	10,389	10,940	11,500	560
Total Degrees	61,605	61,452	68,500	7,048
Goal 2				
High-demand			Base + 1,500	1,500
Job Training	23,700	23,394	25,000	1,606
Improved Literacy	17,300	20,572	20,525	Exceed Target

Goal 1: Increase opportunities for students to earn degrees

The Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) set targets for the number of associate, bachelor's, and graduate degrees to be conferred by Washington's public and private colleges and universities in 2009-10. The board also adopted the targets of the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges for the number of students completing job training programs and the number of students in adult basic education and English as a Second Language programs who demonstrate measurable skill gains.

Associate Degrees

In December 2004, the board revised the associate degree target in response to faster than expected progress toward the target. In 2003-2004, Washington exceeded by 176 the board's original 2010 target of 23,500 degrees. As a result, the target was revised upward by 3,500 degrees to reach 27,000 associate degrees per year by 2010. However, community and technical college enrollment has fallen since 2003-04, and there has been a concurrent reduction in the number of degrees awarded. Unless this trend is reversed, it is unlikely that the state will meet the revised AA target. However, the state can expect to exceed the original target of 23,500 degrees by 2010.

Bachelor's Degrees

Progress toward the bachelor's degree target is outpacing the original master plan projections, and the state can now expect to surpass the 2010 degree target of 30,000 bachelor's degrees. It appears that the baccalaureate colleges and universities are becoming more efficient, because the average number of full-time enrollments per bachelor's degree fell from 3.75 to 3.55 between 2000-2001 and 2003-2004. While it is unclear whether this trend will continue, the HECB now projects the state will attain the master plan target of 30,000 bachelor's degrees per year by 2008.

Graduate Degrees

The growth in the number of graduate degrees has closely tracked the projections of the 2004 plan, and the state can expect to surpass the graduate degree target of 11,500 per year by 360 degrees in 2010.

Goal 2: Respond to the state's economic needs

The HECB also has adopted targets for students earning degrees in high-demand fields, students completing job training programs, and students who demonstrate improved literacy skills. The high-demand target was tied to specific high-demand grant programs operated by the HECB and the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC). Since these programs were not funded in the 2005-07 biennium, the HECB may need to revise these targets. The last two targets on job training and improved literacy were initially adopted by the SBCTC and then accepted by the HECB.

High-Demand Enrollment

This target was established during a biennium in which the governor and legislature provided funding for competitive grant programs to expand the availability of "high-demand enrollment" opportunities for students at public two-year and four-year colleges and universities. The program was designed to increase student access to programs in which student enrollment pressure exceeded available capacity, and whose graduates were in demand by Washington employers. Since then, however, the state has discontinued its competitive high-demand funding, and this target will need to be re-evaluated.

Job Training

The decline in community and technical college enrollment – attributed largely to the state's relatively strong economy and job growth – appears to have been the primary cause of the reduction in the number of students who earned job training credentials from 2003-04 to 2004-05. In the current economic environment, it is unclear whether the state will meet this target by 2010.

Improved Literacy

The community and technical college system has exceeded the SBCTC target for improved literacy among adult basic education and English as a Second Language students. One especially promising development is the two-year college system's effort to integrate basic skills and English instruction into job training programs.

Policy Initiatives

1. Funding for Student Success

Overview

The 2004 Strategic Master Plan for Higher Education identified clear and measurable goals that focused on outcomes rather than inputs alone. To reinforce this outcomes-based approach, the plan proposed that the state develop a new funding method to reward public colleges and universities for student success. Specifically, it proposed that the state allocate higher education funding based on enrollment in the 2005-07 biennium and then transform the funding system beginning with the 2007-09 biennium.

The board outlined four potential approaches to implementing the new system:

- **Performance contracts that involve a formal pact between the state and an institution that spell out the obligations of both parties.** Specifically, the contract would detail the outcomes that would be delivered by the college or university and the resources that would be provided by the state to help achieve those outcomes.

- **Budget provisos that would define legislative expectations for a college or university in terms of degrees and performance targets rather than enrollment levels.** Currently, the most important performance measure of a college or university is whether it met or exceeded the full-time student equivalent enrollment target set by the legislature.

- **Calculating enrollment levels at the time of course completion rather than on the 10th day of classes.** Under this approach, student enrollment would be counted for state funding purposes only if students completed the courses, not if they just enrolled in them.

- **Changing the criteria for selecting high-demand programs for funding from delivering enrollments to producing results.** While the HECB's high-demand budget request was presented in terms of expanding enrollments, the strategic master plan goal for high-demand was stated in terms of program completions.

Implementation

- **In December 2004, the HECB** submitted its final 2005-07 higher education budget recommendations to the governor and legislature. The board's recommendations were based on how well the institutions' requests aligned with the board's budget priorities, the missions of the institutions, and the goals of the 2004 strategic master plan. The recommendations also addressed the first biennium objectives of the master plan.

- **In December 2004, the public research universities and several comprehensive universities** completed prototype performance contracts in collaboration with the Office of Financial Management (OFM).

- **The final 2005-07 operating budget** included budget provisos for each public four-year college and university and the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges. In return for increases in core funding, the budget directed the colleges and universities to show "demonstrable progress" toward achieving identified six-year programmatic goals by June 30, 2007.

- **By January 2006, each public four-year college and university**, in cooperation with the Office of Financial Management and the HECB, will establish six-year targets for these programmatic goals based on the per student funding level. The SBCTC and OFM will establish six-year targets for the goals outlined for the public two-year college system based on the per student funding level. The HECB also will participate in the approval of performance targets for the two-year system, since each of the two-year system performance indicators are already part of the accountability framework previously adopted by the HECB.

- **In December 2005, the HECB** will adopt final budget guidelines for the public colleges and universities that reflect the goals identified in the 2005-07 operating budget and the 2004 strategic master plan.

- **By October 1, 2006, each public four-year college and university** will report to the HECB on its progress and ongoing efforts to meet the six-year targets.

- **By October 31, 2006, the HECB and the SBCTC** will provide summaries to the governor and legislature of the progress and efforts of the public two-year and four-year colleges and universities to meet the six-year targets.

- **By November 15, 2006, the Washington Learns steering committee** will complete an 18-month comprehensive study of Washington's education system and submit a final report, including recommendations, to the legislature. (The steering committee will submit interim reports by November 15, 2005, and June 16, 2006.)

  As directed in Senate Bill 5441, the steering committee will recommend options for creating a new funding system for higher education. The HECB will be working closely with the Washington Learns steering committee and higher education advisory committee as they examine various options and develop their final recommendations.

2. Allocating Student Enrollments

Overview

The Higher Education Coordinating Board needs to make specific enrollment allocation recommendations to carry out the intent of the 2004 Strategic Master Plan for Higher Education. The size and shape of the state's higher education system is of primary concern for decision-makers looking to optimize state resources.

Issues that will influence discussions of the "size and shape" of the system and the board's specific enrollment recommendations include:

- The division of resources among the public two-year and four-year colleges and universities;
- The allocation of new resources and enrollments among the main campuses, branch campuses, and off-site learning centers;
- The role of private colleges and universities in meeting the state's need for additional higher education capacity;
- The regional economic, educational, and programmatic needs; and
- The methods of program delivery, such as traditional instruction, 2+2 programs for transfer students, and technology-enhanced distance learning.

Allocating student enrollment to meet the board's goals requires answering the following questions:

- How many degrees will students earn in the public and private sectors?
- How many public sector enrollments are needed to meet the public sector goals?
- How does this differ from current enrollments?
- What is the current physical capacity of the public colleges and universities?
- What is the regional demand for additional student enrollments?
- What are the funding needs for the additional student enrollments?

Implementation Plan

- **In December 2004, the HECB** submitted its final 2005-07 higher education budget recommendations to the governor and legislature. The board recommended that the state fund 12,900 additional full-time equivalent enrollments, including 6,300 at the public two-year colleges and 6,600 at the public four-year colleges and universities, in order to make incremental progress toward the goals articulated in the 2004 master plan.

- **The final 2005-07 operating budget** provided funding for 7,900 additional full-time equivalent enrollments, including 4,185 at the public two-year colleges and 3,695 at the public four-year colleges and universities.

- **In spring 2005, the HECB** completed a simulation model to help policymakers analyze the impacts and costs of higher education enrollment and funding options. In addition, the model will help the HECB develop options for the size and shape of the state higher education system.

- **In July 2006, the HECB** will release draft higher education enrollment management options for discussion. The options will address opportunities to expand student enrollment; assess the need to revise the roles and missions of existing institutions; and determine whether new colleges and universities are needed to meet regional and statewide needs. The board will use the enrollment management options, in conjunction with the simulation model, to develop its enrollment allocation recommendations.

- **In September 2006, the HECB** will present a final enrollment management plan to the governor and legislature, the higher education community, and other interested parties.

- **By November 15, 2006, the Washington Learns steering committee** will submit a final report to the legislature. Senate Bill 5441, which established the program, calls for the report to address the number and distribution of enrollments at two-year and four-year colleges needed to meet demographic and workforce training needs; methods for determining the cost of instruction in various program areas; strategies to increase opportunity for access to bachelor's degrees at public colleges and universities; and options for using existing capacity in independent colleges and universities. The HECB will continue to work with the Washington Learns steering committee and higher education advisory committee as they develop their recommendations.

- **In November 2006, and every two years thereafter, the HECB** will include enrollment allocation and funding proposals in its biennial higher education budget recommendations to the governor and legislature.

3. Increasing the Number of Degrees in High-demand Fields

Overview

The Higher Education Coordinating Board believes it is critical that the state align its limited resources for public higher education with the needs of the economy. Traditional liberal arts education must remain a core component of the state's higher education system, because the skills it imparts are central to business and career success. However, the state also must respond to student and employer demands in fields where current or projected job creation outpaces the capacity of the higher education system to produce trained graduates.

The 2004 Strategic Master Plan proposed that the state increase the number of students who earn degrees and are prepared for work in high-demand fields by 300 per year to reach a cumulative total of 1,500 by 2010. Reaching this goal requires adding about 1,000 full-time equivalent (FTE) students to the higher education system each year. These degrees and enrollments are in addition to existing degrees and enrollments in the higher education system.

High-demand programs have two primary elements: (1) instructional programs or fields in which student enrollment applications exceed available slots, and (2) career fields in which employers are unable to find enough skilled graduates to fill available jobs. This definition recognizes both excess student demand for a program and strong economic requirements for graduates in particular fields.

Identifying high-demand fields and programs

To help meet the state's economic needs and respond to employer and student demand, the board will develop an ongoing method to identify high-demand fields and programs based on student, employer and community needs. The board believes the state should regularly identify high-demand fields and programs within the statewide and regional higher education needs assessment process that began in 2005, and should provide funding that recognizes the significantly higher-than-average cost of most high-demand enrollment programs, such as those in computer science and health care.

Implementation Plan

1. Identify high-demand fields

- **In October 2005, the HECB** completed a state and regional higher education needs assessment, which examined the needs of students, employers, and communities for higher education at the statewide and regional levels. The report also showed a decline in the number of graduates in certain high-demand fields, such as computer science.

- **By June 2006, a work group** convened by the HECB will identify high-demand fields for the 2007-09 biennium.

- **In November 2006 and every two years thereafter**, the HECB will include a list of eligible high-demand programs in its biennial higher education budget recommendations to the governor and legislature.

2. Fund high-demand enrollment slots

- **In December 2004, the HECB** submitted its final 2005-07 higher education budget recommendations to the governor and legislature. The board recommended that the state fund 2,300 high-demand full-time enrollments, including 1,300 at the two-year colleges and 1,000 at the four-year colleges and universities. The final 2005-2007 operating budget did not specify funding for high-demand enrollments.

- **In October 2006, the HECB** plans to request state funding in the 2007-09 operating budget to distribute competitive enrollment grants based in part on the projected number of degrees produced in high-demand fields. Every two years thereafter, the HECB will address high-demand enrollment funding issues in its biennial higher education budget recommendations to the governor and legislature.

4. Keeping College Tuition Affordable and Predictable

Overview

Washington, like many states, does not have a comprehensive tuition policy for resident undergraduate education. As a result, tuition increases generally have fluctuated in a cyclical pattern: increasing moderately when state revenue is high and increasing sharply when state revenue is low. The absence of a tuition policy has made it difficult for students and parents to anticipate college costs and for Washington's Guaranteed Education Tuition program, the state's prepaid college tuition plan, to plan for long-term affordability. It also has potentially devastating consequences for thousands of financially needy families who often do not have the financial reserves to respond to unexpected spikes in tuition.

Washington needs a state tuition policy that keeps tuition predictable and affordable for students and families while maintaining the high quality of education at the state's public colleges and universities. In addition, it needs to integrate its tuition policy with student financial assistance and state appropriations to colleges and universities – a key recommendation of the National Collaborative for Postsecondary Education Policy. The 2004 Strategic Master Plan called for the state to adopt the following tuition policies for resident undergraduate tuition and fees at Washington public two-year and four-year colleges and universities.

Short-term Tuition Policy

- Tuition and fees would not increase by more than 31 percent during any consecutive four-year period (average increases of 7 percent compounded).
- Annual tuition increases would be spread as evenly as possible over this four-year period and no annual increase should exceed 10 percent.

Long-term Tuition Policy

- The HECB planned to examine alternative tuition policies and make recommendations to the governor and legislature for consideration during the 2006 legislative session.

Implementation Plan

1. Adopt the recommended short-term tuition policy.

- **In December 2004, the HECB** recommended to the legislature and governor that the state adopt the proposed short-term tuition policy, beginning with the 2005-06 academic year.
- **The final 2005-07 operating budget** limited increases in resident undergraduate tuition in each year of the biennium to 7 percent at the research universities, 6 percent at the comprehensive institutions, and 5 percent at the community and technical colleges.

2. Recommend a long-term tuition policy to the legislature and governor.

- **By November 15, 2006, the Washington Learns steering committee** will submit a final report to the legislature. In recognition of that process, the HECB has not developed tuition recommendations, as originally contemplated, for the 2006 legislative session.

  As directed in Senate Bill 5441, the report will recommend the appropriate share of the cost of instruction that should be funded through tuition, general fund-state, and financial aid. The HECB will work with the Washington Learns participants as they examine various tuition policy options and develop recommendations.

- **In November 2006, the HECB** will submit to the governor and legislature its 2007-09 operating budget recommendations, including tuition recommendations for resident undergraduate students.

5. Promoting Opportunity through Student Financial Assistance

Overview

State law declares that "financial need shall not be a barrier to participation in higher education" (RCW 28B.10.786). The Higher Education Coordinating Board believes the state must maintain its longstanding commitment to higher education opportunity for all students, regardless of income.

To help economically disadvantaged students meet the rising costs of a college education, the 2004 Strategic Master Plan called on the state to expand several state financial aid and scholarship programs and create a new pilot program to aid adults who attend college part-time while working full-time.

Implementation Plan

1. **State Need Grant – Serve the state's neediest students.** The state should provide grants equal to 100 percent of tuition to students with family incomes at 65 percent of the state's median and serve all students eligible for the grant.

    - **In December 2004, the HECB** requested an additional $75.2 million in the 2005-07 state operating budget to ensure that the need grants keep pace with tuition increases and that sufficient funds are available for currently eligible students.

    - **The final 2005-07 operating budget** provided an additional $69.7 million in funding to increase the income service level from the current 55 percent of median family income to 65 percent, adjust awards to keep pace with tuition increases, and cover the impact of new state-funded enrollments.

2. **State Work Study – Provide placement opportunities in high-demand fields and restore the number of students served to the program's historic service level.** The state should increase funding for the State Work Study program to provide students with additional job opportunities in targeted high-demand fields and to restore the number of students served to the program's historic level of one in 14 needy students. The board also recommended increases to maintain the student award at approximately 15 percent of each student's financial need throughout the next three biennia.

    - **In December 2004, the HECB** requested an additional $3.9 million in the 2005-07 state operating budget to adjust for increased costs and partially restore the program's historic service level.

    - **The final 2005-07 operating budget** provided a $2.9 million increase in funding to allow student awards to keep pace with tuition increases and higher enrollments.

3. **Educational Opportunity Grant – Increase student participation.** The state should increase funding for the Educational Opportunity Grant program, the state's only targeted financial aid initiative specifically designed to increase the number of students who earn bachelor's degrees.

   - **In December 2004, the HECB** requested $0.5 million to increase the number of participating students.

   - **The final 2005-07 operating budget** did not include any increase in funding.

4. **Washington Promise Scholarship – Promote academic excellence.** To motivate middle and high school students to excel and prepare for college, the state should fund the Washington Promise Scholarship award at the statutory maximum of two-year college tuition.

   - **In December 2004**, the HECB requested an additional $3.5 million to increase annual awards from $1,176 to $1,400. However, the 2005-07 state operating budget eliminated the program, beginning with the high school graduating class of 2005. The budget provided funding to provide final second-year grants to students from the high school graduating class of 2004.

5. **Washington Scholars and Washington Award for Vocational Excellence – Maintain the value of awards.** The state should fund these programs to maintain scholarship awards at the value of public tuition and fees.

   - **In December 2004, the HECB** requested an additional $0.7 million to maintain scholarship awards at the value of public resident undergraduate tuition and fees.

   - **The final 2005-07 operating budget** provided a net increase of $0.4 million. The funding maintained scholarship awards at the value of public resident undergraduate tuition and fees, while also reducing the number of Washington scholars in each legislative district from three students to two students in fiscal year 2007.

6. **Financial Aid for Low-income Full-time Workers – Create a new pilot program.** The state should develop a pilot grant program for low-income, full-time workers who attend college for five or fewer credits per term. Participating students would receive grants equal to tuition, plus an allowance for books.

   - **In December 2004, the HECB** requested $2 million in the state operating budget to fund the pilot project during the 2005-07 biennium. This specific funding was not provided, but the state significantly increased funding for the State Need Grant and authorized the board to use some of this money for the pilot project.

- **House Bill 1345**, enacted in 2005, authorizes the HECB to develop a pilot project within the State Need Grant program to help students enrolled in college less than half-time. Students whose colleges participate in the project may qualify for the need grant if they are enrolled for four or five credits per term, down from the previous minimum of six credits. **Note:** The four- and five-credit limit applies *only* at colleges that participate in the pilot project.

- **In fall 2005, the HECB** selected eight colleges and universities to begin providing need grants to eligible students. Participating colleges include The Evergreen State College, Pacific Lutheran University, Clark College, Columbia Basin College, Highline Community College, Peninsula College, South Puget Sound Community College, and Spokane Falls Community College.

- **By December 2006, the HECB** will report the results of the first year of the pilot project to the governor and legislature.

6. Meeting Regional Higher Education Needs

Overview

Washington's current higher education system has evolved largely in response to changing student demographics, employer demand, community needs, and geographic disparities in students' college attendance. It has not always been planned or implemented in a conscientious or prioritized manner.

To improve the responsiveness and effectiveness of the current system, the 2004 Strategic Master Plan for Higher Education called for the development of a resource allocation framework to respond to local, regional, and state needs with clearly stated priorities. Specifically, this framework would do the following:

- Clearly identify the existing distribution of higher education resources;
- Explain the purpose and inter-relationship of these resources;
- Establish the criteria and authorities by which these resources could change in response to emerging and changing student and regional needs; and
- Use existing and new resources in a coordinated and flexible manner.

Implementation Plan

1. **Develop a simulation model that helps state policymakers analyze the impact and costs of higher education enrollment and funding options.**

   - **In December 2004, the HECB** completed the simulation model. The model will help the develop options for the size and shape of higher education. The HECB recently used the model in developing its recommendations on the future of Washington's branch campuses. The model will be a critical tool in developing and analyzing options for the future size and shape of the state higher education system.

2. **Complete the needs assessment process, as outlined in House Bill 3103.**

   - **In January 2005, the HECB**, with assistance from stakeholders, identified the regions of the state that should be the focus of future data collection and planning initiatives. The HECB has been involved in ongoing planning and needs assessments in Snohomish, Island, and Skagit counties at the legislature's directive and in the Tri-Cities region at the community's initiative.

   - **In May 2005, a work group**, appointed by the HECB, developed criteria for the evaluation of state and regional needs. The work group included representatives of the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges and the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board (WTECB).

- **In October 2005, the HECB** completed a report on state and regional needs assessments, with additional updates every two years. The report projects a need to accommodate an additional 45,000 student enrollments in the public colleges and universities by 2010. In addition, it identifies academic and professional program areas and geographic areas where growth should be targeted in order to respond to student, employer, and community needs.

- **In December 2006, the HECB** will deliver a final report to the legislature and governor on the higher education needs in Snohomish, Island, and Skagit counties, as directed in the 2005-07 capital budget.

3. **Revise the approval processes for new degree programs at the four-year and two-year colleges and universities.**

   - **In September 2005, the HECB** adopt updated guidelines for program approval and facility leases and purchases at public colleges and universities. These guidelines are outlined in *Program and Facility Approval Policy and Procedures*. The HECB developed the guidelines, in close consultation with the public four-year colleges and universities.

4. **Develop and present an enrollment management plan to state policymakers and higher education administrators.** The plan will address opportunities to expand student enrollment; assess the need to revise the roles and missions of existing colleges and universities, and determine whether new colleges and universities are needed to meet regional and statewide needs.

   - **By February 2006, the HECB** will complete a review of the roles and missions of existing public colleges and universities.

   - **In April 2006, the HECB** will complete a statewide inventory of higher education resources, including locations and programs of public and private colleges and universities.

   - **In July 2006, the HECB** will present higher education enrollment management options for discussion.

   - **In September 2006, the HECB** will present an enrollment management plan to the governor and legislature, college and university governing boards, and other interested parties.

7. Helping Transfer Students Earn Bachelor's Degrees

Overview

The state needs a barrier-free transfer system to help community college transfer students earn bachelor's degrees at four-year colleges and universities as efficiently as possible.

The 2004 Legislature directed the Higher Education Coordinating Board to assume a leadership role in working with Washington's colleges and universities to ensure efficient and seamless articulation and transfer across the state. Developing a statewide on-line student advising system was a key assignment, along with developing transfer associate degrees for specific academic majors. Both of these efforts focus on better preparing students before they enter four-year colleges.

In addition to these legislatively mandated efforts, the 2004 Strategic Master Plan called for the elimination of a requirement that community college students who are transferring with associate degrees complete an additional 90 quarter-based credits at a public four-year college or university in order to earn a bachelor's degree. Eliminating this policy would allow students who complete associate degree pathways to graduate with exactly the credit they need to complete their bachelor's degrees.

Implementation Plan

1. **Develop new associate degree pathways that focus on readiness for academic majors at four-year colleges and universities, as required by House Bill 2382.**

    - **In January 2005, the HECB** submitted to the legislature and governor a report, *Articulation and Student Transfer*, which summarized the progress of the work groups in developing associate degree pathways.

    - **In June 2005, a two-year/four-year college work group** completed a new associate degree pathway for nursing. In addition, it identified three additional associate degree pathways to be developed or revisited: (1) business, (2) engineering technology, and (3) earth science (geography) secondary education. The work group, known as the Joint Access Oversight Group, is composed of leaders from the public two-year and four-year colleges and universities.

    - **In September 2005, the HECB** adopted revised academic degree program approval guidelines for bachelor's degrees, which require colleges and universities to identify a corresponding associate degree pathway when they propose a new major.

    - **By December 2005, the work group** will complete new associate degree pathways for elementary education and engineering. In January 2006, the work group will present the new associate degree pathways to the HECB.

- **By June 2006, the work group** will revise the existing associate degree pathways in business and complete new pathways in engineering technology and earth science secondary education.

- **By fall 2006, the HECB** will complete an inventory of existing associate degree pathways that prepare students for bachelor's degrees and identify the number of transfer students earning bachelor's degrees by major.

- **By June 2007,** all four-year degrees that are in high-demand by transfer students will be matched to corresponding associate degree pathways.

2. Eliminate the current 90-credit requirement for transfer students.

- **In November 2004, the HECB** eliminated the 90-credit requirement from the statewide transfer policy and notified Washington colleges and universities.

3. Develop a statewide online student advising system to facilitate transfer and degree planning.

- **In December 2004, the HECB** requested $1.6 million in the 2005-07 operating budget to implement and begin operation of the statewide on-line student advising system. The 2005-07 operating budget did not include any funding for the system.

- **In January 2005, HECB staff and a work group** formed through House Bill 2382 submitted a report, *Articulation and Student Transfer*. The report outlined options and prospective operating and maintenance costs for a statewide online student advising system.

- **In October 2005, the HECB** requested $1.6 million in the 2006 supplemental operating budget to begin development of the system.

- **By January 2007, HECB and college/university staff** will work with the vendor to ensure that course equivalency data is integrated into the statewide system, a student feedback tool is developed, and electronic transcripts are available.

- **By June 2007**, the statewide online student advising system will be fully operational and available to students statewide.

8. Helping Students Make the Transition to College

Overview

Every year, large numbers of Washington students graduate from high school unprepared for college study or, many would argue, the workplace. Fifty-six percent of students who graduated from high school in 2002 enrolled in a Washington public two-year or four-year college or university within one year of graduation. Of those students, 38 percent required remedial mathematics or English courses.

Inadequate preparation in high schools takes a disproportionately greater toll on African American, Hispanic, and Native American students. Students from these groups in the high school class of 2002 were significantly less likely than their White or Asian peers to go on to college within a year of graduation and more likely to require remedial instruction when they enrolled. In addition, students from low-income families are significantly less likely to be enrolled in college preparatory programs than their higher-income peers. Higher education shoulders much of the cost of this lack of preparation.

Leadership at the state level is essential to developing a systemic solution to the problem of inadequate academic preparation. The Higher Education Coordinating Board proposes to collaborate with state K-12 and higher education systems to accomplish the following key initiatives:

- Develop a comprehensive definition of college readiness;
- Establish statewide student learning outcomes for grades 11 and 12 that are required for success in postsecondary study;
- Expand effective models that promote K-12/higher education collaboration and prepare students for college success; and
- Communicate with students, families, and schools the requirements of a rigorous high school education that will lead to successful postsecondary study and careers.

These initiatives will help students prepare for higher education with a clear understanding of the knowledge and abilities required for success and the confidence that their high school coursework will be enough to gain them admission and prepare them for the rigors of college work.

Key outcomes of this proposal include (1) an increase in the number of students who are ready for postsecondary study and (2) the establishment of the critical groundwork to improve instruction, teacher training and development, and guidance counseling; reduce remediation at state colleges and universities; and narrow the achievement gap.

Implementation Plan

1. **Define college readiness in the key subject areas of mathematics, science, English, social studies, world languages, and the arts.**

   - **The 2005-07 operating budget** provided $600,000 to the HECB to develop college readiness definitions for English and science.
   - **In fall 2005, the HECB** developed an 18-month project timeline, in collaboration with representatives of K-12 education, two-year and four-year colleges and universities, and the private sector.
   - **In October 2006, the HECB** will review draft definitions of college readiness for English and science.
   - **In December 2006, the HECB** will adopt final definitions of college readiness for English and science, following extensive public review.
   - **The HECB** may request funding in the 2007-09 operating budget to develop college readiness definitions for social studies, world languages, and the arts, with final board adoption in December 2008.
   - **The State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, HECB, and Council of Presidents** will continue to work together to develop college readiness mathematics standards through the Transition Mathematics Project. The HECB will review the mathematics standards in spring 2005.

2. **Support the efforts of the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to develop guidelines that identify the knowledge and abilities high school students must gain in grades 11 and 12 to be ready for college.**

   - **In January 2006, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction**, in collaboration with the Transition Mathematics Project, will release and begin public discussions of draft Grade Level Expectations (GLEs) in mathematics for students in grades 11 and 12.

3. **Document the variety of college preparation programs administered in Washington state.** The HECB will publish its research findings with analysis and options for expanding the reach of these efforts.

   - **In February 2005, the HECB** submitted to the legislature a report, *Collaborative Efforts to Improve Student Transitions*, which summarized dual-credit opportunities, as directed in House Bill 3103.

   - **By November 15, 2006, the Washington Learns steering committee** will submit a final report to the legislature. As directed in Senate Bill 5441, the committee will examine ways to provide smooth transitions from high school to college, including dual credit options and adequate preparation for college-level coursework. The HECB will be working closely with the Washington Learns steering committee and higher education advisory committee as they develop their final recommendations.

   - **Beginning in January 2007, the HECB** will provide biennial progress reports on increasing dual-credit opportunities.

4. **Educate students, parents, and educators about the new college preparation requirements.**

   - **In August 2005, the HECB** began work with the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to make college and career planning materials available to all Washington high school students. The HECB and OSPI will team up again in August 2006 to make materials available to all middle school students.

   - **Following the 2005-06 academic year, the HECB** will collaborate with colleges, universities, and state agencies to consider strategies to improve feedback to high schools about the performance of their recent graduates in postsecondary education. Data to be developed could inform school districts and the public about the percentage of students from each high school who enroll in postsecondary programs, persist in their studies, and require remedial instruction.

   - **By summer 2006, the HECB** will develop and implement a communications strategy to inform students, parents, educators, and the public about the need for and the development of college readiness definitions in English, science and mathematics.

9. Reducing Barriers for Non-traditional Students

Overview

Washington's higher education system works well for traditional students – the recent high school graduates who go from high school to college and continuously enroll until they receive their degrees. It works less well for "non-traditional" students, although the community and technical colleges in particular have made significant advancements in programs and services during the past decade. "Non-traditional" students include, but are not limited to, unemployed adults, students whose first language is not English, and those who need to balance college, work, and family obligations.

It is imperative for the higher education system to recognize and respond to the educational and training needs of non-traditional students. By increasing the skills and knowledge of these students through education and training, we will be increasing their opportunities to better serve themselves and the state's economic development needs.

Implementation Plan

1. **Assess and address the need for educational and training programs for targeted non-traditional students.**
   - **In summer 2006, HECB staff** will present a draft report to the HECB for review and discussion. The report will include the following components:
     - Identified target groups of non-traditional students, including the numbers of people affected;
     - Statewide assessment of the students' education and training needs;
     - Types and number of programs available in the state to meet those needs;
     - A national and state review of best practices; and
     - Recommendations to the governor and legislature to address the identified needs and gaps, including potential legislation.

     HECB partners include public and private colleges, universities and career schools, and state K-12, workforce training and higher education agencies.
   - **In fall 2006, the HECB** will adopt the final report, including recommendations to the legislature and governor.

2. **Publicize best practices to meet the education and training needs of non-traditional students.**
   - **In spring 2006, the HECB and its partners** will complete a national and state review of best practices in serving targeted non-traditional students.
   - **In summer 2006, the HECB and its partners** will begin distributing this information statewide.

3. **Strengthen the coordination of current efforts to provide education and training programs for non-traditional students.**

   - **In October 2005, the HECB** convened a team of partners representing community colleges, public and private four-year colleges and universities, private career schools, and statewide workforce development organizations. The team will identify programs that serve non-traditional students, gaps in these services, and/or potential areas for expansion. The team then will develop strategies to close the identified gaps through more effective leveraging of existing resources.
   - **On an ongoing basis, the HECB** is working with its partners to coordinate efforts to address the needs of non-traditional students through the approval of new degree programs at the public four-year colleges and universities, development of a statewide higher education needs assessment, and authorization of out-of-state colleges and universities to offer instruction and degree programs in Washington.

4. **Support and promote financial aid policies and programs targeted to non-traditional students.**

   - **In December 2004**, the HECB requested $2 million in the state operating budget to fund the pilot program during the 2005-07 biennium.
   - **House Bill 1345**, as enacted in 2005, authorizes the HECB to develop a pilot project within the State Need Grant program to help students enrolled in college less than-half-time. The legislation reduces the enrollment threshold to at least four credits from the current six-credit minimum.
   - **In fall 2005, the HECB** selected eight participating colleges and universities and began serving eligible students. Participating colleges include The Evergreen State College, Pacific Lutheran University, Clark College, Columbia Basin College, Highline Community College, Peninsula College, South Puget Sound Community College and Spokane Falls Community College.
   - **By December 2006, the HECB** will report to the governor and legislature on the results of the project. The report will evaluate the number of students who might be eligible if the pilot project were expanded statewide, the demographic characteristics and college-going behavior of the students, and the costs to fund it.

10. Promoting Student Success through Greater Accountability

Overview

Accountability is the backbone of a successful educational system. Redesigning the state's higher education accountability system will help the state reach its goals and promote student success at the institution, sector, and state levels.

Currently, the purpose of higher education accountability is unclear and its performance indicators have little relation to institutional or state goals. The board has begun to redesign Washington's accountability system based on the following principles:

- Priorities of Washington colleges and universities are aligned with state goals as defined in legislation and the 2004 Strategic Master Plan for Higher Education;
- Targets are set for the state and each college and university;
- Annual reports detail both significant achievements and areas to strengthen for the state and each college and university; and
- Based on accountability data, statewide and institutional policies are developed to help students succeed in completing their education efficiently, equitably, and effectively.

Implementation Plan

1. **Develop and implement a higher education accountability model that measures progress toward statewide goals.**

   - **In April 2005, the HECB** adopted a new accountability model and a set of common and institution-specific measures for the public four-year and two-year colleges and universities.

   - **The final 2005-07 operating budget** included budget provisos with additional performance measures for each public four-year college and university and the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges.

   - **By January 2006, the SBCTC and each public four-year college and university**, in cooperation with the Office of Financial Management and HECB, will establish performance targets for these measures.

   - **The HECB** will monitor the performance of the colleges and universities in meeting these performance targets annually and will continue to issue biennial statewide and institution-specific progress reports to the governor and legislature.

11. Measuring Student Success with an Improved Data System

Overview

Detailed information about student success is essential to understanding current trends and planning for future improvements. However, unlike many other states, Washington lacks the coordinated data system needed by state policy makers.

The 2004 Strategic Master Plan for Higher Education called for a student unit record data system to evaluate progress toward state goals and to identify and eliminate barriers to student success. The new statewide student-level database would include data about all students at every stage of college – from submitting the college application and deciding where to enroll to choosing a major and earning a degree. A few data sources currently exist, but none are sufficient to meet state needs.

In a 2003 review of other state record systems, the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems reported the following:

- Thirty-seven states have established operational student-level databases, which are managed by either a state university system or state higher education coordinating/governing board;
- Twelve states include some information on private colleges and universities in their databases; and
- About one-half of states also link to other state-level databases, including high school records and wage records.

Implementation Plan

1. Develop a statewide unit record data system for four-year college students

This data system will be similar to the data system used by the state's community and technical colleges and developed in many other states. The Office of Financial Management (OFM) has agreed to collect the data, in consultation with the Council of Presidents (COP) and HECB staff.

- **In December 2004, the HECB** requested $500,000 for the student-focused data system in the 2005-07 operating budget. The final 2005-07 operating budget did not include any funding for the data system.
- **In March 2005,** staff from the HECB, COP, and OFM completed a drafted Memorandum of Understanding for sharing, protecting, and accessing data.

- **In October 2005,** the HECB requested $152,000 in the 2006 supplemental operating budget to begin development of the student-focused data system.

- **By December 2005, HECB, COP, and OFM staff** will reach final agreement with the public four-year colleges and universities on a Memorandum of Understanding.

- **By January 2006, HECB staff,** in consultation with OFM staff and the Data Advisory Group**,** will select a model for collecting and standardizing data.

  The Data Advisory Group, required by House Bill 3103, is composed of representatives from public and independent colleges and universities and other state agencies. The staff and advisory group also will identify policy questions and research projects to be completed during the following two years and submit the prioritized list to the HECB for approval. Some of the priorities will address routine information requests by the legislature, while others will focus on long-term projects that, for example, could track student progress over time and analyze how various factors affect their success.

- **By October 2006, the public four-year colleges and universities** will begin submitting outcomes data to OFM.

- **By December 2006, OFM and HECB staff** will have tested the data and developed prototype reports, ongoing routines, and standards for continuing to collect data on a regular basis.

- **By February 2007, HECB staff** will begin using the data on a regular basis to answer routine questions and to conduct research and produce reports according to the priorities set in June 2005. HECB staff will develop a report schedule for long-term research projects and a survey to determine whether users find the reports and data useful.

- **By March 2007, HECB and OFM staff** will revise the prioritized project list, seeking HECB approval as necessary.

2. **Link data between four-year colleges and other sources to conduct research for use in policy and improving programs.** For example, links would enable the tracking and analysis of data regarding student academic performance and employment.

   - **By June 2007, HECB staff and the Data Advisory Group** will identify potential data linkages, develop a list of prioritized policy questions and research projects to be completed during the following two years and revise or develop agreements for sharing, protecting, and accessing linked data.

   - **By September 2007, HECB staff** will submit the list of prioritized projects to the HECB for approval. The Data Advisory Group will assist in developing protocols, standards, and routines for regularly linking data between agencies and schools. HECB staff will begin linking and testing the new data.

- **By December 2007, HECB staff, in consultation with the Data Advisory Group,** will develop a reporting schedule and user survey. The group will review and discuss any draft reports produced by the HECB staff and resolve any data problems.
- **By March 2008, HECB** will begin regularly producing reports using the linked data. The Data Advisory Group will discuss user feedback, prioritize future projects, and resolve data problems.