

PROGRESS REPORT: SURVEY OF STATE K-20  
PROGRAMS AND INITIATIVES

TO THE WASHINGTON LEARNS STEERING COMMITTEE

FEBRUARY 13, 2005

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Paper for the Higher Education Advisory Committee)

Formatted

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February 13, 2006

## **Progress Report: Survey of State K-20 Programs and Initiatives**

For the Washington Learns Steering Committee and Higher Education Advisory Committee  
Prepared by Richard Lutz and William Chance

### ***Summary***

Members of the Steering and Higher Education Advisory Committees have expressed concerns about “silos” in education. The expression applies to the separately governed and organized and generally self-directed and operated components of the education system. Silos are a prominent feature of the American education scene. Officials in other states were contacted by telephone to discuss what might be happening with respect to K-20 collaboration in their jurisdictions. These telephone contacts continued up to the time of writing, by which date information on 40 states had been collected directly. All recognized the silo phenomenon and reported the presence of such issues in their states (sometimes referred to as 'turfism'). All also identified at least some measures in place or underway to address them.

Different constituencies, cultures, certification requirements, salary systems, and tenure policies are characteristic of education in all states. These are established and reinforced by dedicated funding requirements, separated budgets, different funding ratios, separate statutory titles, and in some cases mandates, as in Washington, sustained by Constitutional requirements and court orders.

The main avenues for resolution are either through *consolidation*, unifying systems by combining structures, and *coordination*, collaboratively creating workarounds while leaving the basic structures intact. Washington and virtually all of the other states (even those with unified systems) have stressed the latter.

Examples of comprehensive education system reorganization through consolidation are sparse. Five states have merged, or consolidated, their education structures, or silos, into one education system (Florida, Idaho, Michigan, New York, and Pennsylvania). All five predate the present interest in K-20 systems, in some cases tracing back to statehood and the formation of their public education systems.

The coordination style has been the more popular, and a number and sizeable variety of inter-sector collaborations have formed or been established through collaborative efforts. Sometimes these are the end products of executive or legislative pressures or initiatives (or, as in the case of Running Start, statutory programs).

Most are effective in terms of the issues they are intended to correct, such as credit loss when students transfer from community/technical colleges to universities, but they also usually are limited to the problem at hand. Much of the activity also clusters around a few forms in a fairly common set of programs. These include concurrent enrollment (such as Running Start) or other college-in-high-school programs, inter-sector articulation agreements, joint efforts directed to teacher/educator quality, curriculum alignment activities, and high school graduation-college admission requirements. Unified student data systems also are featured, some of which are aimed at the accomplishment of an education system-wide information file.

Some efforts at silo reduction center on K-20 councils or other associations of this type. States reporting K-20 efforts of some nature (i.e., some more structured and inclusive than others) include California, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, New Hampshire, Nevada, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Vermont, and Wisconsin.

Unified education data systems for accountability and student tracking purposes and at least one effort to combine education budget processes and budgets also are drawing interest in some states.

Options that might be considered for Washington include the following, generally following the order of least to most feasible. Several could be combined to form a comprehensive K-20 program:

1. Consolidate the education sectors into a single unified education system.
2. Combine separate budget streams into a unified education budget.
3. Develop and employ biennial education budget "overlays" for education accountability and policy purposes.

4. Establish a K-20 council or entity to identify extant initiatives and engage in K-20 planning. This might take one or more of the following forms:
  - Governor's education cabinet.
  - Education roundtable composed of sector and segment heads, perhaps with the Governor as chair; perhaps with private sector participation.
  - Statutory K-20 council with budget and staff; with board composed of sector and segment heads.
  - Voluntary K-20 councils at the state and local levels.
5. Mandate a unified data system for student tracking and other accountability purposes.
6. Require inter-agency collaboration and time-sensitive reporting dates on specified transition issues.
7. Provide incentives for education sectors and segments to address, resolve, and report on specified issues.
8. Continue the status quo.

### ***Introduction***

Members of the Steering and Higher Education Advisory Committees have expressed concerns about “silos” in education. The expression applies to the usually separately governed and organized and largely self-directed and operated components of the education system. Impressions of disjointed sectors in what most believe should be an interdependent system are widely-shared. Although in one sense all of the elements are inexorably interdependent -- middle schools depend on elementary schools to bring students to the appropriate levels of preparation, high schools depend on the middle schools in a similar fashion, colleges and universities look to the high schools to prepare students for college, and the school system relies on colleges and universities for the preparation of teachers and the acceptance of their graduates – there are gaps between them, and the conventional image is of different sectors operating separately, in blissful oblivion of each other.

Officials in other states were contacted by telephone to discuss what might be happening in their jurisdictions in order to follow up on members of the Washington Learns Steering and Higher Education Advisory Committee interest in the issue,<sup>1</sup> The telephone contacts continued up to the time of writing, by

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<sup>1</sup> Choice of terms is important. The conventional terms are “K-16,” “P-16,” and “P/K-20”. “K-20” is employed as the common term in this paper.

which date 38 states had responded with information about their respective efforts in the implementation of solutions, up to and including K-20 systems; information on two others was obtained through other means, for a total of forty states.<sup>2</sup> All recognized the silo phenomenon and reported the presence of silo issues in their states (often referred to as 'turfism'). Many also identified measures in place or underway to address at least some of the aspects of the problem.

The two big silos in every state are the K-12 and higher education sectors. A recent national report on divided governance in education described the setting in these terms:

[Presently] K-12 and postsecondary education exist in separate worlds in the United States. Policies for each system of education are typically created in isolation from each other – even though, in contrast to the past, most students eventually move from one system to the other. Students in K-12 rarely know what to expect when they enter college, nor do they have a clear sense of how to prepare for that next step. Particularly now, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, when more students must complete some postsecondary education to have an economically secure life, the need for improved transitions from high school to college [and from one school - college level to another] is urgent. The need for some postsecondary education extends beyond individual aspirations. In this global economy, businesses and communities – and our nation as a whole – must have residents who have achieved educational success beyond high school.<sup>3</sup>

These silos may be artifacts of the American education system's adjustments to its agrarian heritage (in which case the allusion to 'silos' is ironically apt). Until recently, the high school diploma was the usual goal for most

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<sup>2</sup> All of the states were contacted. Thirty-eight had responded by February 1, 2006, the cut-off date for this paper. The responding states are: Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, California, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, West Virginia, and Wisconsin. Information on Georgia and Washington was obtained from other sources. The quality of survey responses varied among the states, perhaps itself a reflection of the core problem. In some cases respondents in one sector, e.g., K-12, said they did not know of anything underway in this area and suggested contacting the other agency, e.g., the state higher education board, and vice-versa. In many instances the person answering the phone was not familiar with the terminology, whether, K-16, P-20 or K-20, and had difficulty locating the right person to contact. Efforts to locate the 'right person' usually involved a number of attempts.

<sup>3</sup> Andria Venezia, Patrick Callan, Joni Finney, Michael Kirst, and Michael Usdan, *The Governance Divide: A Report on a Four-State Study on Improving College Readiness and Success*, (IEL, NCPPHE, SIHER, September 2005), p. viii.

students. The 180 day school year, formed around the planting and harvesting seasons, may be another artifact of those halcyon years.

Whether or not, these did not form overnight. Stanford professor Michael Kirst traces them to “the laudable way the nation created mass education systems for both K-12 and higher education.’ High schools were designed for many purposes and did not focus primarily on college preparation. Historically, because college was for an elite group of students, college preparation was provided to a minority of students.”<sup>4</sup> In the typical American comprehensive high school, about one-quarter of the students (not all of whom went on to college) were in the college-prep program. About one-quarter were in the vocational program, and half, sometimes the majority, were in the general education program, pursuing a curriculum that prepared them for graduation and not much else. Now that situation has changed as “a majority of high school graduates attend some form of postsecondary education, and almost all students aspire to attend college.”<sup>5</sup> This is changing, but the education infrastructure has not changed with it.

The results are manifest at all levels. The following quote from an Education Commission of the State Policy Issue Paper describes them this way:

In *A Babel of Standards*, Michael Kirst notes that high school students must decipher the maze of admissions related tests and decisions. In the southeastern United States, for example, there are as many as 75 placement tests and more than 125 combinations of these exams... [A]t the postsecondary level, colleges and universities increasingly are placing recent high school graduates in remedial math, language, and science courses. [NCES] shows that students who take any remedial reading courses are less likely to earn a two- or four-year degree than those who take other combinations of remedial courses. The trend toward remedial coursework in postsecondary education is not only expensive for individual states, but also disturbing in light of new state standards and assessments.<sup>6</sup>

The silo metaphor is relatively new. An earlier image was of a pipeline, ideally continuous and seamless, into which students would enter at one end and out of which they would emerge as educated citizens at the other. Reality was equally harsh in that setting, as the ‘pipeline’ perception comprised a series of often ill-fitting and usually perforated sections, through which students could make their way or not.

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<sup>4</sup> Venezia, et al., *The Governance Divide*, op. cit., p. 8.

<sup>5</sup> *Idem*, p. 9

<sup>6</sup> ECS Education Policy Issue Site: P-16 [no date].

The differences between the two may represent differences in perspectives: the silo image may fit better with the perspectives of officials and legislators concerned about effectiveness, efficiency, accountability, and results; the pipeline likeness may fit more with that of students and parents, who need to know which strategies are necessary to make one's way through it as expeditiously and successfully as possible..

Both views are justified, if sometimes overstated, and they also may represent different conceptions of a solution. The silo likeness seems to incline one to *consolidation*, unifying the system by combining, or consolidating structures, and eliminating the physical features of the silos; the pipeline image takes one in the direction of *coordination*, collaboratively creating workarounds while leaving the basic structures intact.<sup>7</sup> Washington and virtually all of the other states (even those with unified systems) have pursued the latter.

Thus, while examples of both approaches are evident, those based on coordination vastly outnumber those displaying aspects of consolidation, especially if its major connotation -- to combine separate elements into one whole -- applies. As noted later, the consolidated systems that do exist -- e.g., a single statewide department of education encompassing all sectors -- either began that way or predate the issue as presently defined.

In some ways this is testimony to the strength and persistence of the silos or the pipe sections that constitute education. Different constituencies, distinct organizational cultures, separate qualification and certification requirements, independent salary systems, and tenure policies, and dissimilar peer systems, along with others are characteristic of education in all of the states. These are both established and reinforced by such 'drivers' as dedicated funding requirements, separated budgets, different funding ratios, separate titles in the Revised Code,<sup>8</sup> and in some cases mandates, as in Washington, established by Constitutional requirements and court orders. Persistent impressions of a zero-sum budget game nurture competition and dampen prospects for cooperation. Federal funding and program regulations also contribute to Balkanization. Closing the gaps by structurally merging the sectors -- consolidation -- so far has not been the most popular solution, but it is worth a brief look.

### ***Consolidation***

#### ***Sector Consolidation/Unified Education Systems***

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<sup>7</sup> Aims McGuiness of NCHEMS first distinguished between the coordination and consolidation approaches.

<sup>8</sup> RCW 28A consists of the public school code; RCW 28B is devoted to higher education, and 28C is directed to "Vocational Education," or, in more modern parlance, "Workforce Preparation."

Examples of comprehensive education system reorganization through consolidation are sparse. Where it exists a close examination usually shows that the resultant forms are more nominal than real in the sense that the silos have been moved from several farms to one. Although they now stand in closer proximity to each other, they still stand as separate structures.

Five states have merged, or consolidated, their education sectors into one education system. These are Florida, Idaho, Michigan, New York, and Pennsylvania. All five, however, predate the present interest in K-20 systems, in some cases tracing the origin back to the formation of their public education system. Although many acknowledge the continued presence of communications problems in states with unified education systems, there also is certain to be some salutary effect in terms of control of or reduction in inter-sector competition. The lines of authority and responsibility are clearer, and the means for keeping inter-sector issues more manageable are more palpable in these systems.

The larger question may be how to get there from here. No state has consolidated its education system since 1963 (Florida had a unified system before the year 2000 'consolidation'). This could be interpreted as implicit testament to the difficulty of accomplishing this form of transformational change. Thus, the structural consolidations that have occurred in more recent years have focused on segments, generally within the higher education system, but divided K-12 and higher education governance remains the more typical American pattern.

Idaho has one education department and is one of the longest-lived examples. The State Department of Education there dates back to the first year of statehood, 1891.<sup>9</sup> As part of reorganization in 1974, the State Board of Education/Board of Regents became one of the state's executive branch departments. The board governs the Department of Education, the four public senior institutions of higher education, the Idaho School for the Deaf and the Blind, vocational education, the Eastern Idaho Technical College vocational education, the Office of the State Board of Education, and the statewide Educational/Public Broadcasting System. It also has general supervision of the state's public education system and its two junior colleges (which also are responsible to locally elected boards of trustees.)

The State University of New York, which is the 'single public education agency' in that state, was established in 1784. It contains all of the elementary, secondary, and postsecondary education institutions, along with the public libraries and museums. The SUNY Board of Regents, a constitutional entity, presides over the universities and the state education department. Within that

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<sup>9</sup> Much of this descriptive information is from ECS's "State Postsecondary Education Structures Sourcebook."

structure the sectors operate much on the order of their counterparts in other states.

The State Board of Education in Michigan was established under the 1963 state constitution. The Board has primary responsibility for elementary and secondary education, and coordination of services authority for the public two- and four-year institutions that it exercises through its policy and budget recommendations to the legislature. Higher education governance is the province of the constitutional Community College Board for those institutions, and the local governing boards for the universities, some of which are constitutionally based (university of Michigan, Michigan State University, and Wayne State University.)

The State Board of Education in Pennsylvania also was created in 1963. The Board is organized into two councils: The Council on Basic Education and the Council of Higher Education. The Board Chair serves on both councils. The Pennsylvania experience may be the most accurate example of consolidation: It was established by the legislature in an action that replaced the College and University Council, which had been created, also by the legislature, in 1895, and the state Council of Education, which was established by the legislature in 1929. Pennsylvania also has a State Department of Education, which is a cabinet agency, and a State System of Higher Education.

The returns are not yet fully in on the fifth state, Florida, and its comparatively recently consolidated system. Florida is a better example of the K-20 response than the others. The genesis of Florida's change was a 1998 constitutional amendment that replaced the State Board of Education [which also had K-16 authority] with a new State Board of Education appointed by the Governor. The state's Education Governance Reorganization Act of 2000 defined the new board's responsibilities, abolished the Higher Education Board of Regents, and created separate governing boards for each university under the State Board of Education, which was responsible for overall policy governance.

Now the Governor appoints the State Superintendent, who administers the state K-20 programs. A 14-member cabinet composed of the chancellors of the K-20 divisions functions as the body that identifies issues, solutions, program development, and a comprehensive K-20 budget.

The organization is complex, but NCHEMS' Aims McGuinness notes that that the change may not be as substantial as it seems: "The formal jurisdiction of the previous Florida State Board of Education [also] encompassed the whole Florida education system, including the state universities, community colleges and the K-12 system. Therefore, the concept of a unified K-20 system was not new in Florida. The new structure gives the concept greater focus and coherence."

McGuinness also notes that the impetus for the change was not so much a matter of creating a K-20 state structure as it was impatience with the Board of

Regents and the political controversies surrounding its approval or disapproval of new graduate and professional programs.<sup>10</sup>

One of the more promising features of the Florida model may be the K-20 Education Data Warehouse, which is intended to integrate existing, transformed data and provide a single repository of information concerning students served in the K-20 public education system, along with data on facilities, curriculum and staff involved in instructional activities. This subject is addressed later in this paper.

### **Segment Consolidation**

Turf Issues can involve not only the main sectors, K-12 and higher education; they also are present among segments ('corncribs') within these sectors. For example, gaps are present between elementary and secondary education, 2-year and 4-year postsecondary institutions, and the academic and vocational realms, to name some of the more obvious. In fact, many of the mitigating efforts to date have focused on issues of this kind or at this level, e.g., credit loss upon transfer from a community college to a four-year institution, addressed in the main by articulation councils and agreements. High school-college disjunctures are a more recent topic of conversation, and most of the state efforts to address this are still in comparatively early form. Many, however, feel the problems are real and significant.

While many states, including Washington, at one time had K-14 systems with junior colleges (now community colleges) under local school district control and within the state-level purview of the department of education, in many cases community colleges have moved symbolically and physically from the secondary to the postsecondary sector (this occurred in Washington with the 1967 formation of the state community college system). This ECS statement notes how the status of community colleges has fluctuated:<sup>11</sup>

Historically community colleges have fallen under different sectors at different times. At times and in different states they have been viewed as extensions of high school and therefore a part of secondary education. At other times they have been seen as the first two years of a college system. At still other times they have been considered as their own entities separate from both secondary and higher education. Governance and coordination has changed in response to what sector community colleges have been assigned.

State-level community college governance varies throughout the country. Six states (Alabama, Florida, Idaho, Iowa, Michigan, and Oregon) lodge

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<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.communitycollegepolicy.org>

responsibility in the state department of education. Sixteen states, including New York, whose SUNY system also is the state department of education, have consolidated governing boards for two- and four-year institutions. In most cases, 19 states, including Washington, independent boards govern or coordinate the community and technical colleges.

The fact that those states with single education systems go back a long way, often to the formation of the public education system, applies at this level as well. Those states that have consolidated segments, such as Washington's community and technical college system, generally began that way. Once the organizational structures and patterns are ensconced, the consolidation option is difficult to exercise.

### **Coordination**

As noted, the coordination route has been the more popular one in most of the states, and a number and sizeable variety of inter-sector collaborations have formed or been established. These might be described as symptom suppression or management “workarounds”, and they often are the end products of executive or legislative pressures or initiatives (or, as in the case of Running Start, statutory programs). Many proceed through inter-sector working groups or committees, some of which, such as Washington’s Inter-College Articulation Committee [ICRC]<sup>12</sup> and California’s Articulation Council, acquire more than an aura of permanence, demonstrating the complexity and depth of the issues and a need to treat them as steady work. Painstaking and time-consuming efforts always are required. Most of these are effective in terms of the issues they are intended to correct, such as credit loss when students transfer from community/technical colleges to universities, but they also usually are limited to the problem at hand, and even when they are effective, perceptions of waste and duplication never seem to go away.

Washington has been in the forefront of some of these: its Running Start program and its statewide public and private two- and four-year institution articulation (credit-transfer) agreements are two examples. Solutions based on collaboration and coordination such as these are the typical style. These may not draw a lot of attention, but this is how most of the work gets done. They also have the advantage of directly involving the people in the separate agencies in the search for agreement and solutions.

Most of the activity in the surveyed states clusters around a few forms in a fairly common set of programs. Essentially these are: concurrent enrollment

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<sup>12</sup> ICRC was formed in 1970, as a successor to the Washington Commission on Colleges and Universities.

(such as Running Start) or other college-in-high-school programs,<sup>13</sup> inter-sector articulation agreements, joint efforts directed to teacher/educator quality, curriculum alignment activities, and high school graduation-college admission requirements. Student data systems also are featured, some of which are aimed at the accomplishment of an education system-wide information file; most, however, pursue data sharing in a more limited field (e.g., first-year college performance of high school graduates.) Based on the telephone survey, the list of major topics or issues that states are working on includes the following:

- Running Start
- Articulation Agreements
- Teacher Quality or Educator Quality
- Curriculum Alignment
- Early childhood or early learning
- Student Tracking, Student Data, and Student Access
- K-20 Arrangements
- Community, Regional, and/or State Implementation
- Economic Status of State
- Graduation Requirements
- Funding Silos

When programs such as these are established, other cross-sector issues frequently emerge. In Texas, for example, the student tracking and student information systems are credited to the concurrent enrollment program. When students move over to the receiving institution, attention to credit for previous work sharpens. This, in turn, prompts the development of articulation agreements and other inter-sector arrangements to make the main program work. Curriculum alignment, still another form of inter-sector coordination, tends to be an offshoot of articulation agreements. Articulation agreements also evolve as other changes occur. When the community college Associate of Applied Science was redefined as a transferable degree, for example, credit for 'vocational' courses became an issue in most states, including this one, bringing the skills training aspect of

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<sup>13</sup> A 1998 SHEEO survey reported that 33 states had some type of early options or dual-credit (concurrent high school-college enrollment) program. Eleven states reported that programs existed but did not provide detail. According to this survey, in 1998, 44 states reported some type of postsecondary options available for high school students. The survey was sponsored by the Oregon Joint Boards of Education, an example of the sort of governance workaround discussed later in this paper. The survey is cited in a NORED paper prepared for the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, "Postsecondary Enrollment Options for High School Students," April 2002.

workforce preparation into the picture and sending the negotiators back to the conference table.

Curriculum alignment is the issue to which collaborative efforts of this sort are addressed. Most of the activity, however, has focused on higher education segment transitions. With the advent of concurrent enrollment programs and mounting interest in continuing on to college after high school, curricular between the sectors is finding its place in the sun. The authors of *The Governance Divide* put it in these terms:

States need to make sure that what students are asked to know and do in high school is connected with postsecondary expectations -- both in coursework and assessments. Currently students in most states graduate from high school under one set of standards and face a disconnected and different set of expectations in college. Many students enter college unable to perform college-level work.<sup>14</sup>

They cite recommendations of the National Education Summit on High Schools in this regard. States should:

1. Define a rigorous college preparatory curriculum for high school graduation,
2. Give college readiness assessments in high school,
3. Create common course agreements so that college-level work in high school counts toward a postsecondary credential,
4. Provide financial incentives for economically disadvantaged students to take Advanced Placement exams and college preparatory courses,
5. Expand college-level learning opportunities in high school to students who are traditionally under-represented in postsecondary education,
6. Design literacy and math recovery programs; and
7. Develop and fund supports to help students pass their high school exit exams.<sup>15</sup>

In some respects the vocational training people have been out in front of the academics on curricular alignment with the Tech-Prep program, which involves the last two years of high school and the first two years of college in an integrated technical program curriculum. There are aspects of the model that are worth considering in the academic realm as well.

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<sup>14</sup> Venezia, et al., op. cit., p. 29.

<sup>15</sup> NGA, *Ready, Set, Go!*, cited *ibid.*

One further observation about the coordination route is worth noting. Florida has become a laboratory to some extent for those who may be interested in consolidation. One author notes that

While the K-20 governance reforms [in Florida] have been rapidly enacted and sweeping in nature, *there [was] an established foundation on which to build*. This include[d]: a statewide articulation agreement; a common course-numbering system; common prerequisites; acceleration mechanisms (for example, Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate); a 36-hour rule for general education courses (all postsecondary institutions must require 36 hours of general education for both two- and four-year degrees); extensive data collection across sectors; a common student identifying number across the sectors; a common application for all public four-year universities; and Bright Futures (a lottery -funded scholarship program geared toward improving student preparation for college and promoting in-state college attendance.)<sup>16</sup>  
.[Emphasis added]

Because it always had something like a single education agency even before it re-consolidated, Florida was able to go further in some of these directions than other states (e.g., with its common course-numbering system); the items exemplified on the list, however, also may suggest that Florida had most of the silo problems within its unified systems as other states with separated units.

### ***K-20 Models***

Many efforts at silo reduction center on governance collaboration, such as K-20 councils; these also fit in the coordination category, although some lack the budget and staffing accoutrements that ensure permanence. As noted in an ECS Policy Brief<sup>17</sup> by Aims McGuiness:

Several states established state-level structures for K-16/K-20 policy coordination between 1997 and 2002, but most of these structures were established not through formal new legislation but by Governors' Executive Orders or other means. With the [possible] exception of Florida, no state established a new K-16/K-20 structure that merged, consolidated, or eliminated separate K-12 or postsecondary education state structures. Examples of new statutory structures that emphasize coordination rather than consolidation include:

- Georgia's A-Plus Education Reform Act of 2000 [which] created an independent Office of Educational Accountability and a new

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<sup>16</sup> *Idem.*, p. 14.

<sup>17</sup> Aims McGuiness, "Policy Brief on Governance," July 2002.

coordinating council for education to strengthen accountability across educational sectors and to oversee the new accountability office.

- Indiana's Education Roundtable, chaired by the governor, [which] was established to coordinate education policy across the education sectors.<sup>18</sup>

The Georgia experience is informative. Both statewide and regional P-16 governance entities were established there to develop and implement change. Cross-sector attention also was directed to teacher preparation and professional development, standards development across the systems, and proficiency-based teaching and learning.<sup>19</sup> The Education Coordinating Council was statutorily established in 2000 as the statewide P-16 council. Governor Barnes served as chair. According to one observer, "The development of the ECC was an instance in which: (1) a state legislated the meeting of representatives from each public education sector; (2) the entity was given a set of priorities; and (3) a governor officially led the charge."<sup>20</sup>

The Georgia HOPE scholarship program, dual enrollment, and system-wide admission and placement testing at state universities are examples of efforts in that state to bridge the sectors. Others that are underway include: "the Post-Secondary Readiness Enrichment Program [PREP] (an institutionally-based, supplemental program focused on increasing college readiness for students in grades 7 through 12 in at-risk situations), the Partnership for Reform in Science and Mathematics... and Performance Assessment for Colleges and Technical Schools..." which seeks to change the college preparation emphasis from seat time to student learning and knowledge<sup>21</sup>

Most other state efforts in this direction center on joint meetings as ways to bring the separate organizations more closely together, at least for the time of the meeting. They do not involve fundamental restructuring. The organizational assortments include the following: Some of these coordinative efforts have statutory authority, program budgets, and permanent staff to manage them.

Joint Legislative Education Committees

Governor's K-20 Councils

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<sup>18</sup> Other states reporting K-20 efforts include California, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, New Hampshire, Nevada, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Vermont, and Wisconsin

<sup>19</sup> Venezia, *etal.*, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

<sup>20</sup> *Idem.*, pp. 15-16

<sup>21</sup> *Idem.*, p. 16.

Education Roundtables

Governor's P-20 Initiatives

Transition Councils

Governor's Education Cabinets

Often lacking a statutory framework or budget, the effectiveness and endurance of such programs become functions of leadership, waxing or waning in accordance with executive or legislative priorities. If the incoming governor does not share the same passion for the issue after the incumbent leaves office the initiative is likely to fade.

Conversations have occurred in some states about whether K-20 should be legislated or voluntarily developed. Hawaii and Kentucky, for example, have commenced K-20 efforts without formal legislation, using grants for that purpose. In these states local education institutions may choose to participate or not, and the inter-sector agreements will be voluntary. Indeed, most of the voluntary programs have proceeded with local funds.

Some states are considering at least a modicum of a statutory structure for their K-20 relationships. In Missouri, for example, SB 580, which is presently under consideration by the Legislature, requires the Commission of Higher Education, the chair of the coordinating board, the Commissioner of Education, the president of the State Board of Education, and the Director of the Department of Economic Development to "meet [not less than twice each calendar year] and discuss ways in which their respective departments may collaborate in order to achieve a more efficient and effective education system that more adequately prepares students for the challenges of entering the workforce." The bill also identifies some of the policy issues to be discussed during these meetings (a state-coordinated economic/educational policy, identifying obstacles to funding that would cross jurisdictional lines, programs to improve student success at the next education level, getting higher education faculty to spend time in public schools and private workplaces, fostering collaboration with the business sector, remediation, among others). The bill requires annual reports on progress on the specified issues each January.

### ***Unified Education Data Systems***

Unified education data systems may prove essential to efforts to get at the issues that were identified in all of the surveyed states. There is some movement in this direction, but so far it is not widespread. In addition to Florida, mentioned above, other states are moving in the direction of integrated data systems. Ohio, for example, has a student information system that includes high school, community college, and four-year institution data. This system is in place and operational, and a long list of annual and special reports have been published as a result. It also appears to be evolving in the direction of even greater

comprehensiveness, although it is not yet clear whether comprehensiveness will be defined as a single and complete data system for education as whole.

Creation of high quality data systems is one of the measures recommended by the authors of *The Governance Divide* report. In their words:

States must create high-quality data systems that span the K-16 continuum. K-16 data systems should identify good practices, diagnose problems, provide information about all education levels, provide students with diagnostic information to help them prepare better, assess and improve achievement, and track individual students over time across levels. Without such systems, it is impossible to assess needs effectively, understand where the problems are, gain traction for changes needed, and evaluate reforms.<sup>22</sup>

In their report they also provide this information from the National Center for Educational Accountability:<sup>23</sup>

[N]ine states collect student-level data on high school course completion; six states collect data for results on SAT, ACT, and Advanced Placement exams; fewer than ten states link their K-12 student records with postsecondary enrollment, and eight states have available information about student remediation in postsecondary education.

The lack of tracking data is a national problem, bringing up the accountability aspect of a unified data system. The *Governance Divide* writers define the need in the following terms:

States need to connect their accountability systems for K-12 and postsecondary education. Currently, accountability systems are usually designed for either K-12 or postsecondary education without much attention to the interface between the two. Accountability systems need to reflect, better, the reality of students' educational paths.<sup>24</sup>

### ***Unified Budget Systems***

It can be argued that all of these initiatives and programs ultimately require attention to the state funding systems, or budgets, that contribute to and sustain the separations. No state has a fully unified K-20 funding system. Even in those states with combined or consolidated governance structures (Florida, Idaho, Michigan, New York, and Pennsylvania) the traditional separated funding streams endure. *The Governance Divide* authors offer this recommendation:

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<sup>22</sup> *Idem.*, pp. 32-33.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.* The NCEA quote is from their "Minimum Requirements for a Student Achievement Information System" 2003 survey.

<sup>24</sup> Venezia, *etal.*, *op. cit.*, p. 35

State education finance systems must become K-16; this includes the legislative committees and staff functions that oversee finance and budgetary decisions. If education finance can span education systems, it has the potential to drive change in many other policy areas as well.<sup>25</sup>

An effort to get at the underlying issues through the budget in Oregon is attracting attention. This is based on the Oregon Education Roundtable white paper, *What Cost. What Results for K-20: The Need for a Transparent, Performance-Driven Budget to Transform Oregon Education from Preschool to Graduate School*. As part of its study, the Roundtable analyzed Oregon's 2002-2003 expenditures for K-12 and postsecondary education as though they derived from one budget. It found that the level of state investment varied dramatically by grade and degree level, with community colleges receiving the least state aid and special education in K-12 schools receiving the most. In addition, the research determined that since the passage in 1990 of Oregon's ballot measure establishing limits on property taxes, state investment in pre-K programs, middle school education, K-12 special education, and community college developmental education had increased. All other areas -- elementary and high school education, community college lower-division education and professional training, and Oregon University System lower-division, upper-division, graduate, and professional education had decreased.

The Business Council consequently recommended to the governor that Oregon adopt a reform plan for pre-K-20 governance, budgeting, and management. Under the plan, budgets would be based on per-student costs per service, outcomes would be established for every education level and service, school spending would be transparent, and student performance at every institution would be likewise. In order to implement the proposed system, the state would need to determine distinct programs, organize appropriation and expenditure data to support clear and accurate student-level resource accounting, develop and execute new resource distribution rules, and report on individual program spending and related performance.

The proposed model would span all of the education systems; outline available per-student funding from all public and private sources; isolate services into understandable bundles for purposes of analysis and decision-making; establish explicit performance expectations for each program; and report the performance of each school and program.

In the eyes of the OBC, from a strategic perspective, the Governor, the Legislature, and the Joint Boards would set performance expectations and priorities for the budget, create teams to work on efficiencies and delivery improvements in high-impact areas, and set forth a two- or three-biennium plan

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<sup>25</sup> *Idem.*, p. 30.

to accomplish the work. Through the Joint Boards, the governor would lead policy discussions and assign teams to address improvements in areas such as: high school redesign, high school and lower-division alignment, policies for tuition and need-based aid for public and private institutions, K-12 transportation, special education, and English as a second language.

The benefits would include more informed choices for decision-makers; clarity of tax dollar use; creation of opportunities for broad redesign and reinvention; and increases in program effectiveness by focusing on service quality and continuous improvement.

The OBC notes that there are several hurdles to overcome in implementing such a reform plan. State government in Oregon does not presently have the capacity to make the necessary changes, and developing this capacity will require significant legislative and public support. These transformations also are likely to take longer than the governor's term, even if re-elected, and sustaining reforms across different administrations is difficult. Finally, some entities are likely to perceive the changes as threatening and resist, creating additional setbacks along the way.

Nevertheless, according to a National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education Policy Brief to be released in March,<sup>26</sup> “the political leadership established the tone and expectations for change [in Oregon]. The governor set concrete goals in the areas of high school graduation, college completion, and system delivery. The Joint Boards -- [composed] of members from the State Board of Education and Board of Higher Education - then recommended the following three infrastructure components:<sup>27</sup>

- “A unified education delivery system with curriculum alignment so that exit standards from one sector equal entrance standards to the next;
- “A unified data system that can track students across the continuum and by institution; and
- “A unified, transparent budget that connects all education sectors.”

The Center’s brief continues with the observation that most current state finance systems perpetuate the divide between K-12 and postsecondary education by creating two separate funding streams. These lack incentives that

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<sup>26</sup> With special thanks to Center Vice-President Joni Finney for sharing the draft for use in this briefing paper for Washington Learns.

<sup>27</sup> The Oregon Joint Education Boards are an example of the K-20 education roundtable form of a K-20 Council.

can promote and support college-readiness reforms, and in many cases they undermine such reform. The clear objective should be to provide incentives in state budgets and finance for increasing the proportion of students who complete high school and enroll in postsecondary education and training programs.

If Oregon succeeds with this model, according to OBC leadership, it should be able to reduce financial inefficiencies, target resources more strategically, fulfill the stated goals of improving student progress throughout the education pipeline, and provide a more lucent system of financing.

One last observation before leaving the OBC model, the proposal seems to presume a single education budget for the state as a whole, but there appears to be no clear reason why such a model could not be developed and applied as an analytical tool to provide the same information without completely dislocating and replacing the present budget system. This is yet to be determined, but Washington's state budget system is rather sophisticated, and it may have the capacity to develop and support such a tool.

All of the states employ separate budgets for the main components of their education system. Although many recognize the problems that emanate from this, none have been able to fully surmount them – so far none have been able to cut the Gordian knot. Coordination rather than consolidation obtains, and silos persist. The results are apparent in the myriad inter-sector programs that operate throughout the country, on the one hand, and the absence of obviously strong K-20 programs, on the other.

### ***K-20 Options***

Washington educators have been active and effective in addressing many K-20 transitional aspects. The methods employed have been collaborative, tightly focused, and incremental. These terms are not employed in a pejorative sense; rather these efforts usually have been successful, in no small part because they entail informed conversations among the people who normally work the problems.

Because of their difficulty, synoptic or transformational changes in this setting, such as combining the separate sectors into one consolidated education system or developing a single education budget, do not throb with forceful magnetism in this and most other states. Yet, many consider these separations as either the cause or major contributors to the problems. Thus far no state has accomplished transformations that might correct them. Even in the states with unified education systems, coordination, collaboration, and cooperation appear to be the preferred styles. Still, transformational change of this nature is always on the table, and the following list of options starts with it. These are steps that other states have taken. For the most part they are not mutually exclusive, and several could be combined into a comprehensive program:

1. Consolidate the education sectors into a single unified education system.
2. Combine separated budget streams into a unified education budget.
3. Develop and employ biennial education budget "overlays" for education accountability and policy purposes.
4. Establish a K-20 council to identify extant transition initiatives and engage in K-20 planning in one or more of the following forms:
  - Governor's education cabinet.
  - Education roundtable composed of sector and segment heads, perhaps with the Governor as chair; perhaps with private sector participation.
  - Statutory K-20 council with budget and staff; with board composed of sector and segment heads.
  - Encourage voluntary K-20 councils at the state and local levels.
5. Mandate a unified data system for student tracking and other accountability purposes.
6. Require inter-agency collaboration and time-sensitive reporting dates on specified transition issues.
7. Provide incentives for education sectors and segments to address, resolve, and report on specified transition and silo issues.
8. Continue the status quo.