

November 6, 2012

Members of the Student Achievement Council
917 Lakeridge Way SW
P.O. Box 43430
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Dear Council Members:

Thank you for seeking the input of the State Board of Education in the development of your strategic plan for the new Student Achievement Council. The State Board of Education respectfully submits the following priorities for your consideration.

- **Affordability of post-secondary education in Washington State**

The Legislature's general fund support for higher education has steadily declined. Meanwhile, tuition at some public universities has increased nearly 55% over a 4-year period. Additionally, tuition-setting authority had been ceded to the Institutions, further blurring the lines between public and independent colleges in Washington State. This combination of factors makes affordability a significant obstacle to higher education for the children of low and middle-class families.

In K-12, the program of basic education is regarded as an entitlement, in part because it is deemed in statute to be necessary to prepare each student for "gainful employment and citizenship" in life. However, by its funding decisions, the legislature has essentially deemed post-secondary education a luxury, rather than a necessity, for students. If we believe that some form of post-secondary education and training is a necessary stepping-stone to gainful employment, then Washington needs a finance strategy that reflects that belief. We believe the Student Achievement Council can play a productive role in this regard, and we offer our assistance and support.

- **Continuity of academic standards from K-12 to Post-secondary education**

In implementing the Common Core Standards, we have an opportunity to create seamless academic standards between the two sectors of education in Washington State.

Currently students face different academic standards for exit of K-12, and entrance into higher education. This manifests both in terms of course requirements (differences in high school graduation requirements as compared to minimum college entrance requirements), as well as differences in assessments (tests used to earn a high school diploma, versus entrance into college or placement in a particular course). The remediation challenge we face may in part be a function of the standards disconnect between our two sectors.

As the K-12 world works to connect our graduation standards to minimum college entrance requirements in this state, we urge the higher education community to consider formally

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adopting the 11th grade Common Core test from the Smarter/Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) into the system rubric for admission and placement decisions, so that students experience seamless expectations through the two sectors. We believe the Student Achievement Council, through its involvement in the Core to College Initiative, can play a lead role in this regard.

- **Developing a K-12 Accountability System that Reflects Shared Expectations of College/Career Readiness between the Sectors**

The State Board of Education has, among other duties, the responsibility to develop an Accountability Index that incorporates measures of college and career-readiness upon which schools and school districts are to be held accountable.

The data tell us that high school graduation is not enough. Remediation rates are high, and student persistence at the post-secondary level is a concern. The State Board of Education invites dialogue with the Student Achievement Council to develop system measures that go beyond graduation rates. What quantifiable attributes do we seek in our exiting students, so that they will be prepared for post-secondary success? We believe the Student Achievement Council can play a meaningful role in contributing to the work of the Achievement and Accountability Workgroup (AAW), which has been tasked with supporting this work.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide this feedback on your strategic plan, and look forward to continued dialogue in the months ahead on how to foster seamless transitions between the two sectors.

On behalf of the membership of the State Board of Education,



Ben Rarick, Executive Director
State Board of Education

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