

August 16, 2010

Michael McKinney, chancellor of the Texas A&M University System, response to invited testimony as chairman of the Council of Public University Presidents and Chancellors (CPUPC, or “see-pup-see”). CPUPC is a very loose association of public independent universities and independent boards who have similar interest and frequently share best practices.

With regard to the structure and operation of the Coordinating Board, the recommendations provided below represent personal opinion as well as recommendations among members of the Council. Recommendations and observations include the following:

1. **The state should consider creating a single public education entity,** guided by directors appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate. This would combine oversight responsibilities of public education and higher education into a single Pre-K thru 20-plus agency (including graduate school, professional education).
2. **Higher education policy should be set by the legislature.** Goal-setting should be done by the Governor and legislature.
 - **Higher education goals should be determined by the legislature** with the responsibility of achieving state-set goals up to the Coordinating Board, Regents and institutions working together. In regards to closing the gaps what the institutions need to do is clear but the “how” to succeed component remains an area for the Coordinating Board, Regents, System and institutional leaders, to identify and implement.

- Programs to achieve these goals must come from universities and the Regents.
 - The Coordinating Board should advise the legislature and government on whether the proposed programs will meet the legislative goals.
3. **The state should have a central repository for higher education data.** In Texas, we have 38 public general academic institutions, six university systems each with a Board of Regents, and four independent public universities with their own Board of Regents. Data consistency is difficult to achieve with so many different sources of data (each institution, system-generated, and that generated by the Coordinating Board, as well as data collected and reported by other state agencies).
- **Data reporting must be reviewed in terms of the generation of useful information.** Reports that are not useful to management should be eliminated. Many reports required today were introduced years ago and may no longer be relevant to the recipient. Data reporting is a huge burden on the institutions, so any opportunity to eliminate or streamline the reporting process would be greatly appreciated.
 - **Required reports could be provided a sunset process,** with the opportunity for originators of the required reports (and recipients of the data) to indicate a desire to continue the report if the data is not readily available elsewhere. Usefulness of each report to be reaffirmed by the Coordinating Board and the legislature every 6 years.
 - **A list of approximately 500 required reports** has been assembled by university professionals who have worked diligently to identify opportunities to reduce the reporting burden by sun-setting cumbersome or duplicative reports.
4. **Institutional participation is vital to advancing efficiencies in higher education,** including statewide advisory committees, pilot program development, and work groups.

- None of us is as smart as all of us. I strongly suggest that when decisions have already been made, that the education agency not waste time of those who already have plenty to do. The “inclusion” of us in foregone conclusions is not participation but manipulation.
- **Review standing committees**, advisory committees and similar activities in terms of the generation of useful outcomes, time invested and balanced representation (urban/rural, research/regional, etc.) and eliminate those without a clear benefit to the people of Texas.

5. **Increased communication and transparency through technology** to the higher education community will be helpful, in areas such as:

- **Offering a listserv or automatic email alert service to notify us when reports are available** online.
- **Offering a second automatic alert system to announce meetings** conducted at the Coordinating Board, to include formal standing and advisory committee meetings as well as those which are more limited in participants, but may be just as important for all institutions to be aware.
- **Updating the Coordinating Board’s website.** Often it is easier to directly contact a staff member than it is to find the information online.

In summary, the public institutions of higher education are eager to advance education in Texas. This may be best done through a single Pre-K thru 20+ Board. The designated agency would coordinate the implementation and achievement of state-determined goals through relevant and meaningful activities with the most efficient utilization of time and resources (data reporting, face-to-face or online meeting participation, etc.).

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